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AN INTRODUCTION
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*(A Corrective of Long's History of
English Literature)*

By
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INTRODUCTION

A GREAT book generally reflects not only the author's life and thought, but also the spirit of the age and the ideals of the nation's history." (*History of English Literature, Long, p. v.*) Consequently, it is necessary, first, to have an intelligent understanding of the historical background of any period before being able fully to appreciate its literature. And it is evident that in proportion as the difference is great between the men and ideals of our times and those of another age, in that proportion must we make an honest and studious effort to understand them. This is the reason why such study is indispensable for the proper appreciation of Chaucer and his contemporaries. Theirs was an age of faith, when the Church was the center of civic and domestic life: ours is an age of unfaith, when in civic matters the complete separation of Church and State has been an accomplished fact for generations, while in private life the directive influence of the Church has been rejected for that bane of modern society, private judgment. It would be quite reasonable to attempt to give a Catholic *viewpoint* in a history of our own sceptical age, but it would be utterly senseless to attempt it in writing medieval history, "because", as Belloc has said, "a viewpoint implies an inadequate survey of a subject—whether it be a landscape or an historical epoch—and the history of medieval Catholicism includes the history of medieval civilization in its entirety."

In the beginning of our brief historical study it is very important that young students especially should be warned against a false sense of *fairness* and *tolerance* in their study of medieval history and literature. "You cannot be fair to the truth," says Belloc. "The truth is not one of two interesting antagonists around whom you keep a ring. If you do not support it, you cannot help attacking it." (*Catholic Mind*, July 22, 1921.) In similar strain, Devas warns us against a false ideal of tolerance. "In science", he says, "we may not, in the name of tolerance, interpose between the extremes of Ptolemy and Galileo a *via media*, that the earth goes round the sun from Mondays to Wednesdays, and the sun round the earth from Thursdays to Saturdays, and on Sundays alternately." (*Key to Progress*, p. 226.) Obviously, a similar compromise in either literature or history could only result in conclusions equally untrue. This is the reason why, as Belloc expresses it, "A Protestant historian is not to be commended, because he admits that many of the monasteries suppressed by Thomas Cromwell were well conducted. Rather is the Catholic historian to be commended who thoroughly exposes the ill-conduct of many of the monasteries, but who tells us what really happened." (*Catholic Mind*, July 22, 1921.)

Another fundamental principle of historical and literary study that cannot be recommended too strongly to young students is this: "the greatness of any epoch must be measured largely by the difference between the condition of men at the beginning of it and at its conclusion." (*The Thirteenth Greatest of Centuries*, Walsh, p. 6.) Consequently, if we would know the greatness of the Middle Ages, we must not compare their achievements with the achievements of our own century, "wonderful, but unwise", as it has been called. Rather, we must compare the fifteenth cen-

tury's loveliness in Christian art and its marvels in Christian civilization with the utter chaos in all things that marked the beginning of the Middle Ages in the fifth century.

There is nothing new or original in the following pages. They are not written for the specialist or advanced student, but for those who are just beginning to awaken to the fact that the account of the Middle Ages to be found in popular text-books is utterly false and, consequently, the superstructure of literary criticism built upon such a foundation is necessarily untrue. A conspicuous example of this sort of criticism is Long's *History of English Literature*. In his introduction, Long states that "behind every book is a man; behind the man is the race; and behind the race are the natural and social environments whose influence is unconsciously reflected" (*p. 2*). This is the reason why he attempts to give "a brief, accurate summary of historical events and social conditions in each period" before proceeding to a consideration of its literature. But the historical synopses given at the beginning of the various chapters of Long's work fall very short of being accurate summaries of historical events and social conditions. This is particularly true of the chapter entitled the "Age of Chaucer."

Moreover, if what Long has written on the history of the Middle Ages were the accurate account that it professes to be, how were it possible, in view of the principle quoted in the preceding paragraph, for an age so narrow, slavish and ignorant to produce Chaucer, "one of the greatest of English writers" (*Long, p. 86*), a "scholar" (*p. 68*), and a man of broad sympathy and wide experience,—"traveler, businessman, and courtier, sharing in all the stirring life of his times" (*Ibid.*), a poet who could describe a type from every walk of life "with a quiet, kindly humour,

which seeks instinctively the best in human nature, and which has an ample garment of charity to cover even its faults and failings" (p. 78), one who, in his immortal *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales*, is "a model for all those who would put our human life in writing" (*Ibid.*)? Obviously, Long is mistaken either in his historical synopsis or in his general theory that natural and social environment is unconsciously reflected in literary work. The denial of the fact that "a great book reflects the spirit of the age and the ideals of the nation's history" is a proposition that will not be seriously considered by anyone with even slight knowledge of the history of literature. That Long, in his historical synopsis of the Age of Chaucer, gives us a false impression of that age will be shown in the following pages. In this corrective, the method adopted is merely to quote the statements of accepted specialists in opposition to what Long has written. Not a few of these authorities are non-Catholics and all of them are scholars, whose critical judgments are accepted to-day by all fair-minded students and scholars, Catholics as well as non-Catholics.

We shall say very little here on the subject of monasticism, though it played so important a part in the history of medievalism, because it will be more properly treated in the correction of Long's historical synopsis of the period commonly known as the English Renaissance, but which he, arbitrarily and inaccurately, calls the Revival of Learning.

CHAPTER I.

THE AGES OF FAITH

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THERE is no epoch in history that has been so misrepresented and misinterpreted as the so-called Middle Ages. From the days of the early Renaissance, until our own time, there has been a sort of conspiracy against the truth that would make the Middle Ages a time of darkness, ignorance and superstition. Even in casual conversation, the term "medieval" has come to be used only in an opprobrious sense, to signify whatever is backward, stupid, and generally behind-the-times. In ambitious volumes on history and literature, the epoch is defined as merely an intermediary one between antiquity and modern times. As a matter of historical fact, the Middle Ages are very different from the merely negative period described by many writers of history, and they join two periods that were scarcely as ideal as modern writers have represented them.

"Which are the two periods separated by this break of a thousand years known as the Middle Ages?" asks Kurth, the late distinguished scholar of Liège. And his answer to the question is scholarly and final, with the finality born of truth: "We are told that they are the two great civilizations of history—the ancient and the modern; the ancient, the Greco-Roman, with its splendid unity of a world pacified beneath the standards of Rome; the modern, with the infinite variety of its national groups and the untold wealth of its intellectual manifestations—two worlds equally impressive, equally wonderful. They tell us

that between these two quite distinct periods there stretches the long span of ten centuries during which the ancient civilization was dead and the modern civilization was yet unborn. These ten centuries, in their estimation, constitute a zone of darkness separating the light of the Greco-Roman world from the light of the Renaissance. Note that the very definition puts the Middle Ages outside the pale of civilization and brands them as a *night of a thousand years*.

“Let us see precisely in what consists the opposition thus formulated between the generally received idea of the Middle Ages and that of civilization. Which are the two civilizations separated by the ‘darkness’ of the Middle Ages?

“The first, of course, is the pagan civilization. With slavery as its foundation and Cæsarism as its keynote, unable to satisfy the higher aspiration of the human soul, it offers all the pleasures of life to the privileged few who wallow in sensual pleasures, but condemns the rest of humanity to slavery.

“Which is the second or the modern civilization? Certainly not the Christian civilization, for, otherwise, the second period would not begin as late as the end of the Middle Ages, which were thoroughly imbued with the Christian ideal. On the contrary, this second civilization is a civilization which reacts against the Christian ideal by evoking the pagan spirit from the ashes of the past and which, like paganism, gives the despotism of Cæsar as a code to the State and the quest of pleasure as a law to the individual. It is a recurrence of pagan civilization.

“If, as most writers assert, the Middle Ages are really an intermediary period, it is precisely because this epoch enthrones the Christian ideal of mortification and poverty between the first and second periods of this pagan civilization. This aspect of the Middle

Ages makes the second civilization but a revival of the old civilization:—antiquity arises from the grave, again takes possession of the world, closes the parenthesis opened by the Middle Ages and begins anew the era of the great progress of humanity! This view of the Middle Ages would regard Christianity as nothing but an eclipse, after whose passing men again walk the road of free scientific research and taste again the great æsthetic joys of life. The Renaissance virtually puts an end to Christianity. Civilization, paganism, and the Renaissance become synonyms, just as barbarism, Christianity, and the Middle Ages are synonymous.” (*What are the Middle Ages? Kurth-Day, pp. 5-7.*)

A more detailed refutation of false history concerning the Ages of Faith is given us in the writings of an American non-Catholic, Ralph Adams Cram, who thus describes the closing centuries of that great epoch:

“Wonderful as was the eleventh century, the twelfth was more amazing still; it was the middle point between the beginnings and the consummation; all the potentialities of the eleventh century were gathered up and focused for the culmination of the thirteenth century. It was the age of the guilds and communes, the development of the schools and the advancement of learning; of the military orders of knighthood and of chivalry; of the *trouveres* and *troubadours*, of Chretien de Troyes and the Arthurian legends and the *chansons de gestes*; of Noyon, Chartres, Notre Dame; Innocent III., S. Bernard, S. Anselm, S. Bruno, S. Norbert, S. Thomas Becket, Peter the Venerable, Suger, Abelard, William of Champeaux; the Emperor Lothair II., Richard Cœur de Lion, Henry II., King Philip Augustus, Fulk of Anjou, Roger of Sicily, Matilda of Tuscany,

Eleanor of Guienne, Blanche of Castille. The twelfth century names seem almost to cover the whole field of religious devotion, monastic vigor, dogmatic enrichment; of chivalry and poetry and art; great kings, statesmen, popes, sainted bishops and monks, models of knighthood, poets, sculptors, architects, glass-makers shoulder each other in the throng that surges through the century. National self-consciousness, individual confidence and self-respect, industrial emancipation and development, the growth of schools and universities, go hand in hand, and when the thirteenth century opens there seems nothing more to do. There was enough, however, as we shall see.

“Pope Innocent III. and King Philip Augustus had been carried over from the twelfth century, and with them came S. Francis and S. Dominic, who were to be for the thirteenth century what the Cistercians had been for the twelfth, the Cluniacs for the eleventh. All over Europe the spirit of nationality, fostered during the past two centuries, was to reach its highest point. There were great kings in all the world: Henry III., Edward I., Robert Bruce, Philip Augustus, Louis IX., Frederick Barbarossa, Frederick II., Rudolph of Hapsburg, Ferdinand III., Alfonso the Wise; there were great pontiffs in Peter’s chair: Innocent III., Gregory IX., Boniface VIII. In England, S. Edmund of Canterbury, Stephen Langton, and Robert Grosseteste were worthy successors of S. Hugh of Lincoln and S. Thomas Becket. Catholic philosophy came full flood in the persons of Albertus Magnus, Duns Scotus, Roger Bacon, S. Bonaventure, Raymond Lully, Alexander Hales, and, prince of all, S. Thomas Aquinas; while Blanche of Castille, S. Clare and S. Elizabeth of Hungary carried on the traditions of great women. The beginnings of Christian poetry, painting, sculpture and

architecture, revealed in the twelfth century, became the perfect achievement of the thirteenth, the Arthurian and the Nibelungen epics take on their perfect form, the Meistersingers and Minnesingers rise to new heights, while Latin hymnology becomes almost a distinct category of the fine arts, the *Dies Iræ*, *Stabat Mater*, *Hora Novissima*, *Vexilla Regis*, *Pange Lingua* standing forever by themselves on a plane unapproachable. Finally, culmination of all, comes Dante*, the full flowering of Medievalism. Simultaneously the allied art of music, which Catholic civilization had evolved for its own expression, reached its highest record point in the perfecting of plain song, or the Gregorian mode; in Sienna and Florence painting was born through Duccio, Cimabue, and Giotto, while sculpture, restored in South France a century before the Pisani, found at their hands and at those of the sculptors of Chartres, Paris, Rheims, Amiens and Wells, a fruition that placed it almost on the level of the great sculpture of Greece.

"All the minor arts, such as those of the metal worker, glass stainer and illuminator rose correspondingly; while architecture, the chosen art of the time, reached, in the final Gothic of France and England, a perfection never equalled before, nor approximated since. Bourges and Amiens and Rheims, Westminster, Lincoln, York Abbey, Wells remain, and, so far as we can see, must so remain forever, the highest expression of the human intelligence working in architectural forms.

"Every monastery had its free school open to any who would, and often its circulating library as well: industrial education at the hands of these same mon-

* (For a comparison of Dante, writing under the influence of Catholic tradition, and Milton, reflecting the unlovely traditions of Puritanism, cf. pamphlet "*Puritanism in History and Literature*." Paulist Press.)

asteries and the guilds was broader and more efficient than ever before or since, while the great universities, Bologna, Paris, Padua, Montpellier, Orleans, Valencia, Valladolid, Oxford, grew into a position of power that commanded a wider and more universal influence even than modern universities exercise to-day. Commerce and industry became almost perfectly organized, and the workman occupied a position more dignified and more satisfactory to himself than he ever has acquired since. To Pope Innocent III. we owe the institution of the public or city hospital as we know it to-day, and as a result of his labors, by the end of the century, nearly all the larger cities in Europe possessed their free hospitals for the sick and isolation hospitals for lepers and others suffering from diseases known to be contagious. Finally, in the matters of civil liberty, development of constitutional government and the organization of law and justice, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries take perhaps the first place in history. The Constitutions of Clarendon, Magna Carta, Bracton's *de Legibus*, the codification of the common law under Edward I., the Codes of Frederick II., the Institutes of S. Louis, the Vehmic courts of Germany, the Golden Bull of Andrew II. of Hungary, the codices of Canon Law of Gregory IX. and Boniface VIII., are not only the landmarks of civil liberty, they are as well the foundation, in great measure, of all modern law." (*The Great Thousand Years*, pp. 15-20.)

Such, in part, are the Ages of Faith as history records them. But even such a picture sketches chiefly the temporal blessings and external facts of the times. It is true, but it is partial. The real blessing of those ages was the spiritual force that vitalized them. It has been well described by Montalembert when speaking of a single institution within the Church, monasticism:

“We are, doubtless, obliged to acknowledge and admire the cultivation of so many forests and deserts, the transcription and preservation of so many literary and historical monuments, and that monastic erudition, which we know nothing to replace; these are great services rendered to humanity, which ought, if humanity were just, to shelter the monks under a celestial shield. But there is, besides, something far more worthy of admiration and gratitude — the permanent strife of moral freedom against the bondage of the flesh; the constant effort of a consecrated will in the pursuit and conquest of Christian virtue, the victorious flight of the soul into those supreme regions where she finds again her true, her immortal grandeur. Institutions simply human, powers merely temporal, might, perhaps, confer upon society the same temporal benefits: that which human powers cannot do, that which they have never undertaken, and in which they never could succeed, is to discipline the soul, to transform it by chastity, by obedience, by sacrifice and humility; to recreate the man wasted by sin into such virtue that the prodigies of evangelical perfection have become, during long centuries, the daily history of the Church. It is in this that we see the design of the monks, and what they have done. Among so many founders and legislators of the religious life, not one has dreamt of assigning the cultivation of the soil, the copying of manuscripts, the progress of arts and letters, the preservation of historical monuments, as a special aim to his disciples. These offices have been only accessory — the consequence, often indirect and involuntary, of an institution which had in view nothing but the education of the human soul, its conformity to the law of Christ, and the expiation of its native guilt by a life of sacrifice and mortification. This was for all of them the end and the beginning,

the supreme object of existence, the unique ambition, the sole merit, and the sovereign victory." (*The Monks of the West, Introduction, pp. 8-9.*)

From these quotations alone, we may form a fairly adequate idea of the positive forces, external and internal, that flourished during the Ages of Faith. But it will help toward a truer appreciation of the benefits to mankind that were introduced and fostered by medieval Christianity, if we see them presented in contrast with the evils of paganism which they replaced. "We are the heirs of the Middle Ages," says Kurth, "not, as some would have it, the heirs of Greece and Rome.

"The Middle Ages put an end to ancient slavery and called all men to freedom. To loosen, link by link, the chain of slavery was the work of centuries. It resulted in the most positive accomplishment of modern civilization.

"The Middle Ages rent the imperial unity of the world and substituted the modern nationalities. These nationalities still exist and the twentieth century has no higher task than to guard their welfare and foster their friendly relations.

"The Middle Ages created the modern languages and thereby gradually eliminated the Latin. These are the languages which we speak to-day and which hold unprecedented eminence in the world of thought.

"The Middle Ages accepted the Christian Faith with love and defended it on every battlefield and with every weapon. Is not the Christian faith the queen of the world to the present day? Has any non-Christian conception of the universe been embodied in an organization as glorious as the Church or here below manifested itself by a more marvelous fecundity?

“The Middle Ages made the Papacy the most respected institution of the world. Even in our own time the pre-eminence of the Papacy is undisputed.

“The Middle Ages enforced the distinction between the temporal and the spiritual—the great principle which flows from the Gospel and which in the past has renovated and to-day upholds the political and social spirit of the civilized world.

“The Middle Ages founded the constitutional monarchy and representative government, both unknown to antiquity, but which are indispensable conditions for the political existence of modern nations.

“Under the shelter of these public liberties, which were guaranteed by covenant between prince and subject, the Middle Ages gave impetus to all forms of association, from the municipal corporation down to the labor union, and bequeathed to us models to which, in spite of the storms of revolution, humanity unceasingly turns for imitation.

“The art of the Middle Ages has become our art. The name Gothic, which was applied to the architecture of the Middle Ages as a term of reproach, is bestowed on our art as a title of glory and to-day we draw inspiration from the very works which our predecessors despised.

“The poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries gloried in their ignorance of the national poetry of the Middle Ages; we love it, we admire it, we have given it our undying affection. Littré has shown how unjust is the contemptuous attitude of Boileau towards the literature of the Middle Ages.

“And we shall not have surpassed the Middle Ages until we shall have erected a more beautiful cathedral than that of Rheims, painted a more inspiring canvas than the picture of the Adoration of the Lamb, and written a poem more powerful than the *Divina Com-*

media. All that we have — our religion and our political ideas, our nationality and our language, our æsthetics and our social economy — all these connect us with the Middle Ages and separate us from antiquity." (*What Are the Middle Ages? Kurth-Day*, pp. 25-28.)

It is a truism among historians that a genius is the product of his age. To know that the Middle Ages were rich in geniuses, we have only to recall the names already cited in the quotation from Cram. But there is one, called the synthesis of medieval thought, who deserves more detailed mention, — Saint Thomas Aquinas. Henry Adams, who will scarcely be charged with partiality toward the Church, has described Saint Thomas and his great achievement thus:

"Saint Thomas is still alive and overshadows as many schools as ever he did; at all events as many as the Church maintains. He has outlived Descartes and Leibnitz and a dozen other schools of philosophy more or less serious in their day. He has mostly outlived Hume, Voltaire and the militant sceptics. His method is typical and classic; his sentences, when interpreted by the Church, seem, even to an untrained mind, intelligible and consistent; his Church Intellectual remains practically unchanged, and, like the Cathedral of Beauvais, erect, although the storms of six or seven centuries have prostrated, over and over again, every other social or political or juristic shelter. Compared with it, all modern systems are complex and chaotic, crowded with self-contradictions, anomalies, impracticable functions and outworn inheritances; but beyond all their practical shortcomings is their fragmentary character. An economic civilization troubles itself about the universe as much as a hive of honey-bees troubles about the ocean, only as a region to be avoided. The hive of Saint Thomas sheltered God

and man, mind and matter, the universe and the atom, the one and the multiple, within the walls of a harmonious home.

“Theologians, like architects, were supposed to receive their Church complete in all its lines; they were modern judges who interpreted the law, but never invented it. Saint Thomas merely selected between disputed opinions, but he allowed himself to wander very far afield, indeed, in search of opinions to dispute. The field embraced all that existed, or might have existed, or could ever exist. The immense structure rested on Aristotle or Saint Augustine at the last, but as a work of art it stood alone, like Rheims or Amiens Cathedral, as though it had no antecedents. Then, although, like Rheims, its style was never meant to suit modern housekeeping and is ill-seen by the École des Beaux Arts, it reveals itself in its great mass and intelligence as a work of extraordinary genius; a system as admirably proportioned as any cathedral and as complete; a success not universal either in art or science.” (*Mont Saint Michel and Chârtres*, pp. 349-351.)

Another reflex of the spiritual and intellectual life of the Ages of Faith may be found in the pages of the *Imitation of Christ*. “Its editions are to be counted by thousands; and though it was written by one of different nationality, of different religion from our own, — though, since he was laid in his unknown grave, empires have risen and fallen, churches have flourished and decayed, yet even here in England, and at this close of the nineteenth century, it is probable that nearly every educated man possesses a copy of this book, and is familiar with those ‘brief, quivering sentences’ which make us feel, while we read them, as if we had laid our hand upon the heart, throbbing with sorrows like our own, that beat so many centuries ago

in the old monk's breast." (*Great Books, Dean Farrar, p. 299.*)

The elevation of woman, one of the greatest blessings of the Ages of Faith, is spoken of with sympathy and truth in no less a surprising place than *Lecky's History of Rationalism*. "The world is governed by its ideals," we are told, "and seldom or never has there been one which has exercised a more profound and, on the whole, a more salutary influence than the mediæval conception of the Virgin. For the first time woman was elevated to her rightful place, and the sanctity of weakness was recognized as well as the sanctity of sorrow. No longer the slave or toy of man, no longer associated only with ideas of degradation and of sensuality, woman rose, in the person of the Virgin Mother, into a new sphere, and became the object of a reverential homage of which antiquity had had no conception. Love was idealized. The moral charm and beauty of female excellence was, for the first time, felt. A new type of character was called into being; a new kind of admiration was fostered. Into a harsh, ignorant and benighted age, this ideal type infused a conception of gentleness and of purity unknown to the proudest civilizations of the past. In the pages of living tenderness which many a monkish writer has left in honour of his celestial patron; in the millions who, in many lands and in many ages, have sought, with no barren desire, to mould their characters into her image; in those holy maidens who, for the love of Mary, have separated themselves from all the glories and pleasures of the world, to seek, in fastings and vigils and humble charity, to render themselves worthy of her benediction; in the new sense of honour, in the chivalrous respect, in the softening of manners, in the refinement of tastes displayed in all the walks of society; in these and in many other ways we detect

its influence. All that was best in Europe clustered around it, and in it is the origin of many of the purest elements of our civilization." (*Vol. I., p. 225.*)

From what we have seen, it is evident that the Ages of Faith were very different from our own materialistic times, for then "the seven liberal arts, and, incidentally, all human knowledge, in handmaidenly fashion, were used to promote an understanding of man as well as of the saving teaching contained in Scripture." (*The Medieval Mind, Henry Osborne Taylor, Vol. II., p. 67.*) But we must not think that this spiritual view of life resulted in the intellectual darkness of which we so often hear. "Intellectually, the thirteenth century in Western Europe is marked by closely connected phenomena: the growth of universities, the discovery and appropriation of Aristotle, the activities of the Dominicans and Franciscans. . . . These movements were universal, in that the range of none of them was limited by racial or provincial boundaries." (*Ibid., p. 378.*)

The same author gives a more detailed picture of the universality of this growth when he says, "no kind of men was more quickly touched by the new mobility than the thousands of youthful learners, *who desired to extend their knowledge*, or, in some definite field, perfect their education. *In the eleventh century such would have commonly sought a monastery, near or far.* In the twelfth, and then in the thirteenth, they followed the human currents to the cities, where knowledge flourished as well as trade, and tolerable accommodation might be had for teachers and students. Certain towns, some for more, some for less obvious reasons, became homes for study. Bologna, Paris, Oxford are the chief examples. Aenerius, famed as the founder of the systematic study of Roman law, and Gratian, the equally famous orderer

of Canon law, taught or wrote at Bologna when the twelfth century was young. Their fame drew crowds of laymen and ecclesiastics, who desired to equip themselves for advancement through the business of the law, civil or ecclesiastical. At the same time, hundreds, which grew to thousands, were attracted to the Paris schools — the school of Notre Dame, where William of Champeaux held forth; the school of St. Victor, where he afterwards established himself, and where Hugo taught, and the school of St. Genevieve, where Abelard lectured on dialectics and theology.”

That the influence exercised by these teachers was not merely local, we learn from Renan of Averroes, whom Henry Adams, in his autobiography, calls the highest authority on the subject. Renan tells us, “One of the most singular phenomena of the Middle Ages is the activity of the intellectual commerce and the rapidity with which books were spread from one end of Europe to the other. The philosophy of Abelard, during his lifetime (1100-42), had penetrated to the ends of Italy. The French poetry of the Trouveres counted, within less than a century, translations into German, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Flemish, Dutch, Bohemian, Italian and Spanish. Such or such a work, composed in Morocco or in Cairo, was known at Paris or Cologne in less time than it would need in our days for a German book of capital importance to pass the Rhine.” This was written in 1852, “when,” as Mr. Adams says, “German books of capital importance were revolutionizing the world.”

But the light of the Ages of Faith did not brighten the lives of the great and noble only, as the joyousness of the work of medieval artisans shows so clearly. “Every line of Gothic Art contradicts the popularly accepted notion that the Middle Ages was a period of gloom and repression. The riot of carving, that gaiety

and vigor of the little grotesques that peer out from pillars and cornices, the pure and joyous color of frescoes and illuminated manuscripts, the delight in work that overflowed in free and beautiful details in the common articles of daily use, tell the tale of a rich and abounding life, just as much as the unanswerable logic of Greek architecture tells of a life oppressed with the sense of fate.

“It is important that these fundamental differences should be acknowledged. Gothic architecture was the visible expression, the flowering of the dogmas of Christianity, and it cannot finally be separated from them. Apart from them, it would never have come into existence. It was precisely because the men of the Middle Ages had their minds at rest about the thousand and one doubts and difficulties that perplex us, as they perplexed the Greeks, that it was possible for them to develop that wonderful sense of romantic beauty which enabled them to build the cathedrals, abbeys, and churches that cover Europe. If the acceptance of dogmas puts boundaries to the intellect in one direction, it does so to break down barriers in another, for dogmas do not strangle thought, but cause it to flow in another direction. Under Paganism, thought flowed inwards, giving us philosophy; under Christianity, it flows outwards, giving us the Arts, Guilds and Economics. Gothic Art, like Christian dogmas, rests finally upon affirmations. It seems to say: This is the right way of treating stonework; this leadwork; and so on. And it says all these things with authority in terms that admit of no ambiguity.” (*A Guildsman's Interpretation of History*, Pentz, pp. 121-122.)

This blended composure and joyousness of medieval craftsmanship was coupled with a dignity and intelligence in manual labor quite in contrast with the

degradation and monotony of modern industrialism. "Personality, varied, vital, distinguished, marked the sculpture of Rheims, together with an unerring sense of beauty of formalized line, and an erudition of familiarity with the Scriptures, with scholastic philosophy, with the lives of the saints, and with the arts and sciences, that would appear to do away with the quaint superstition that the Middle Ages were a time of intellectual ignorance. The men who carved the statues were not of the æsthetical elect; they were not a few highly-trained, well-dressed and supercilious specialists, working in the confidence born of years of study in Paris and Rome; they were stone masons, members of their own self-respecting union, who had worked their way up a little higher than their fellows, and so could carve each his group of statues to the satisfaction of bishop or abbot, or master mason, and—which was even more to the point—to his own satisfaction, and in accordance with the jealous standards of excellence of his guild. He had to know what he was doing, and what he had to express; there was no ubiquitous architect to instruct him, no 'committee on symbolism' to show him the way, and if he could not read well enough to enjoy a modern yellow journal, or write well enough to forge a name or draft a speculative prospectus, he did know far more about religion, theology, philosophy, history, and the contemporary sciences and arts, and romances than the modern workman with his years of public school behind him, or many an architect or sculptor with his high school, preparatory school, and university training behind him as well.

"They knew, and felt, and enjoyed, these sculptors of Rheims, whose work endured for six centuries, and might have lasted six more. Perhaps the quality of enjoyment was more clearly expressed than anything

else. These carved figures at Rheims and Amiens and Paris show in every line the good human joy of doing a thing well, just as so much of the output of so much of modern industrialism shows the dull indifference or weary disgust for doing a thing ill. No sculptor then would have contented himself with making a clay model, and a plaster cast, and then turning the execution over to a gang of ignorant day laborers, working like banderlegs only, with the intelligent assistance of mechanical device. The artist was a craftsman, and the art was a craft, just as the craft was an art, and the work shows it all to those who still can see." (*The Heart of Europe*, Cram, p. 250.)

The heart of the economic system that produced this joyousness and contentment in the wonders of medieval art was the guilds. "They protected alike the labourer and the consumer, maintained a standard of craftsmanship fully worth the adulation of Mr. Penty — the standard of Salisbury and Chartres and Tattershall, and maintained a standard of life which William Morris, the artist, and Thorold Rogers, the scientist, have united to extol and to regret.

"The genius of this system was the fellowship of all those engaged in the several industries; the protection of the unlucky in an industry; the restraint of the dishonest; in fine, a co-operation not in the labour itself, but in the maintenance of a *milieu* favourable to the discharge of the labour and of the circumstances conducive to a high standard of life in general for the participants." (*The Real Democracy*, Mann, Sievers, and Cox, p. 3.)

"The craft-guild embraced within its scope not only the strictly technical, but also the religious, the artistic, and the economic activities of medieval society. It was first and foremost undoubtedly an industrial organization, but the altar and the pageant, the care

of the poor and the education of the young, were no less parts of its functions than the regulation of wages and hours and all the numerous concerns of life." (*An Introduction to the Economic History of England*, Lipson, p. 296.)

Consequent upon the destruction of these guilds and the perversion of the medieval ideal upon which they were founded, there has resulted a dehumanizing of labor in modern industry, the evils of which have been vividly sketched by Ruskin: "It is verily this degradation of the operative into a machine, which, more than any other evil of the times, is leading the mass of the nations everywhere into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for a freedom of which they cannot explain the nature to themselves. Their universal outcry against wealth, and against nobility, is not forced from them either by the presence of famine, or the sting of mortified pride. These do much, and have done much in all ages; but the foundations of society were never yet shaken as they are at this day. It is not that they are ill-fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and, therefore, look to wealth as the only means of pleasure. It is not that men are pained by the scorn of the upper classes, but they cannot endure their own; for they feel that the kind of labor to which they are condemned is verily a degrading one, and makes them less than men." (*Stones of Venice*, Vol. II., pp. 180-181.)

"And the cry that rises from our manufacturing cities, louder than their furnace blast, is all in very deed for this — that we manufacture everything there except men; we blanch cotton and strengthen steel, and refine sugar, and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine, or to form a single living

spirit, never enters into our estimate of advantages.” (*Ibid.*, p. 182.)

Even in this very brief corrective of false notions concerning medievalism, we must not omit to say a word about the union of Church and State that maintained at that time, for it is the very foundation upon which medieval civilization was built. Our aim here is merely to *understand* what the medieval ideal of Church and State really was and upon what principles it rested. Without such an understanding, none can ever hope to know medieval civilization as it really was. True, one may scout the medieval ideal and deny its principles, but none who hopes to understand the epoch may ignore them.

Innocent III., in a letter to the princes of the German Empire, illustrates the union of Church and State very aptly by four passages from Holy Scripture, — the two Cherubim over the Ark of the Covenant (*Exodus, xxxvii, 7.*); the pillars in the porch of the Temple (*3 Kings vii, 15.*); the two lights in the firmament of heaven (*Gen. I., 14.*); and the two swords (*Luke, xxii, 38.*) In all of these examples, one element does not tend to destroy the other, but supplements it harmoniously. But what was to happen in case of conflict between Church and State? Which was to be preferred? The answer of medievalism was the answer of Catholicism, — “the Church”, and the reasons for this answer should be evident.

“First of all, there must be some right way whereby to determine which power should yield to the other in case of collision. This way cannot be physical force — the law of the strongest, though the State is fond of settling matters so. Such is not the will of God. This way, again, cannot be mere argument, for the process would be endless and inconclusive. This way cannot be the intervention of any third human power,

for there is no third power qualified to intervene. This way cannot be compulsory arbitration or compromise, for the same reason, because there is no other party entitled to compel the litigants. I have said *compulsory*, because the two powers may, if they both please, come to an arrangement without sacrificing any radical right.

“The only way left is that of authority residing in either of the powers, whose legislative boundaries are in dispute, and to be exercised by that power. Now, I ask, in which of these powers does this authority reside? I say, as I have already said above, in the Church. For, in the first place, though the Spiritual and Temporal orders are distinct, and, to a considerable extent, independent of each other, still the former is above the latter in dignity and importance; nay, more, the latter is to be referred and directed to the former as involving a higher and ulterior end of the same human beings who belong to both. Our principal destiny is the eternal happiness of Heaven, which, assuredly, pertains to the spiritual order. None but infidels can question this position. The power, therefore, which presides on earth in the spiritual order, namely, the Church, is entitled to preference in case of a collision of claims. It alone has the right to decide in such a case. Further, that power, namely, the Church, has its commission formally from God Himself, a special and supernatural commission, far more exalted in its character than any possessed by the State. But what most conclusively completes and clinches the argument is that God has appointed His Church the guardian on earth of His whole Law, Natural, and Positive, the supreme expounder of moral right and wrong, and, likewise, the interpreter of her own charter—her own commission.” (*The Relations of the Church to Society*, O'Reilly, p. 69.)

“In normal society, therefore, as it existed in the Middle Ages, it was clearly recognized that while it was the function of the Church to make good men, it was the function of government to build them into the social structure.” (*A Guildsman's Interpretation of History, Penty, p. 193.*) This is the doctrine that prompted the courageous reply of St. Thomas of Canterbury to his King, Henry II., “You are my liege lord and, as such, I owe you my counsels: you are my son in the Spirit, and I am bound to chasten and correct you.” (*Life of St. Thomas of Canterbury, Morris, p. 225.*)

The reasonableness of this doctrine of the union of Church and State is admirably stated in a quotation which Hergenröther cites from Von Moy, and in the same passage there is a very suggestive contrast drawn between this medieval arrangement and its modern substitute. “As long, then, as the Christian faith prevailed, and the Church was universally regarded as an institution founded by Christ for the salvation of men, disputes could, indeed, arise between the Pope and the Emperor, between bishops and civil princes, about *particular* rights and obligations; but the end of the State, as well as of all the things of earth, could not be opposed to the end of the Church: the temporal order of things could not be opposed to the ecclesiastical order of things, as altogether independent and simply an end in itself. Nor again, as had happened in heathen times, could Church and State be merged into one; but they remained rationally united. The Church could no longer identify herself with any State or any civil order; but every State found in her a source of elevation and consecration for its earthly efforts and institutions, and a healing balsam for the necessities from which they sprang. All this has been changed by the Reformation, which

has recognised, indeed, the supernatural end that had been given to our earthly life by Christianity, but rejected the Divine institution of the Church, with her sacerdotal and teaching office. The work of the Church was thus transferred to the State, and the Church made an institution of the State. Religion became at once a serviceable instrument in politics: and this occurred not merely in Protestant, but also in Catholic countries; for the need of protection against the violence and encroachments of Protestantism gave such great prominence to the civil sword and State authority, and made the position of the rulers of the Church so difficult, that even in Catholic countries the State grievously encroached on the religious domain. This abuse was formally erected into a system, and called in France, Gallicanism; in Germany, Febronianism or Josephism; in Spain and Portugal, Pombalism. It was a system of hypocrisy and meanness, and its results were soon evident. In the Protestant States, the Reformation continued its work of disintegration; and the break-up into a number of sects at length rendered it impossible for the government to continue their ecclesiastical dominion: in the Catholic States the depreciation and misuse of all that was most holy, the insubordination of the powerful and the powerlessness of the clergy, shook the faith of the masses, and in great measure wholly destroyed that of the upper classes. This led to the French Revolution, which rejected Christianity and the Church alike, and set up the State anew as an institution reposing simply on human wills, and existing simply for this life, and for earthly ends. This is the 'modern State' according to the pattern of which all other States of Europe have gradually transformed themselves, and made its constitution and principles their own. When it first arose, it made a vigorous at-

tempt to extirpate Christianity, and a weak attempt to create a heathen religion as a support for itself. As both failed, it had to allow Christianity to exist, but only as a matter of personal taste and individual opinion—only as a form, in itself indifferent of religious views, having no claim whatever to political influence or recognized legal position. This is the modern principle of ‘freedom of conscience’, which is as necessarily and essentially connected with the modern State as the idea of the finite with the infinite.” (*The Catholic Church and the Christian State, Her-genröther, Vol. I., pp. 23-25.*)

Some historians there are who freely admit that the general effect of the union of Church and State during the Ages of Faith was beneficial to society, but they emphatically deny that the acquisition of wealth and political power could be consistent with the divine institution of Him who was the personification of poverty and humility. But Christ has nowhere condemned either power or wealth. He came upon earth, it is true, to found His Church, whose final end is purely supernatural, but the attainment of that end required a society of men which in its establishment and conduct required both wealth and power. The anathemas of our Saviour were not hurled against the just acquisition and right use of wealth and power, but against the unjust acquisition and wrong use of them. The wealth and power of the medieval Church were justly acquired and rightly used as history shows. They were justly acquired, because they were bestowed upon the Church by Her own children in gratitude for the spiritual and material benefits which the Church had brought them. The Church used these gifts rightly, because She used them, first, to halt the avalanche of barbarism that threatened the very foundation of Western civilization and, after-

wards, to mould these same rough peoples into the rugged foundations of Christian society. This society once established, the Church continued to use Her power and wealth for its maintenance and improvement.

The gifts of wealth bestowed upon the Church at this time were chiefly great tracts of land, because all wealth in those days was measured in land. Since political power, as well, was then dependent upon the amount of land a person owned, the political power of the Church grew in proportion to the number and extent of the benefices bestowed upon Her. When, for instance, a manor was given to the Church, the political power vested in the former baron passed to the representative of the Church who succeeded him, usually an abbot of a monastery. If the gift was a dukedom, made up of several manors, the political power of the former duke, together with the allegiance of his one-time dependent barons, was vested in the representative of the Church to whom the benefice was entrusted. Since medieval barons and dukes and all owners of land in those days possessed not only the right of property and political power, but the power of judges as well in all disputes that might arise between their dependents, the grants of land made to the Church vested in Her ministers not only great wealth and political power, but judiciary power as well.

Writers who admit these historical facts are often fair-minded enough to concede that the Church acquired its wealth and power justly, but they frequently deny that it was consonant with Her divine mission to accept and retain them. Such an objection is merely the result of an attempt to interpret medieval affairs, when there was a union of Church and State, in the light of our own civilization in which the

separation of Church and State has been an accomplished fact for generations. It is true that the medieval Church possessed nearly one-sixth of the wealth of the civilized world, but what were its obligations? — the care of the sick, the education of the people, the maintenance of roads and bridges for pilgrims, provision for the widow and orphan, the encouragement of art, the construction of churches and cathedrals, the support of Catholic ritual and, in fact, every human activity except the conduct of war and the care of prisoners. When Taine calls attention to the fact that the medieval Church received ten times the revenue of the State, it were well to remind him that the Church had fifty times the obligations of the State. To say that these obligations were the result of usurpation on the part of the Church and that in fulfilling them She exercised an unjust monopoly, is the same as saying that a Christian missionary in foreign lands has acquired his influence and exercises his power unjustly. Rather, the influence and power enjoyed by a missionary after years of labor is but the flowering of a natural growth and development. After years of varied labor and suffering, the missionary often finds himself possessed of power and influence limited only by the confines of his activity. "As a teacher of reading and writing and arithmetic, he endeavors to enlighten dull intellects. As a catechist, he instructs both children and adults in the doctrines and dogmas of our holy religion. As a priest, he baptizes, preaches, unites in holy matrimony, absolves, and offers the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. As a physician, pharmacist, and infirmarian, he visits and prescribes for the sick, both prepares remedies and applies them, makes coffins and buries the dead. As a lawyer, he defends the weak against the strong, the stranger from the attacks of the natives, and the

natives themselves from the cunning of the stranger. As a judge and peacemaker, he reconciles enemies and prevents the shedding of blood. As a carpenter, laborer, mason, architect and engineer, he builds houses and churches, and lays out streets. He drains marshes, hews down trees that cause malaria, and plants those that prevent it. He sows and reaps, clears the timber and converts deserts into fertile fields." (*Manna-McGlinchey, The Conversion of the Pagan World*, p. 135.) Such was the task and such was its result among the pioneer Franciscans in the West; among the early Friars in the Philippines and the Jesuits in Paraguay; and it was not different in the case of the early Church whether its efforts were directed toward degenerate Rome and decadent Greece or toward the whole of Europe prostrate at the feet of barbarian invaders. The resultant wealth and power of the medieval Church was but a natural sequel to the heroic efforts of the early Church. Moreover, the general *use* made by the medieval Church of this wealth and power saved Europe and its civilization, whatever may have been the evils born of *abuses* in particular instances.

The Church, as we have seen, was the very centre of every phase of medieval activity and it followed as a natural consequence that the central dogma of the Church was the very centre of men's lives. That dogma, as we know, was and is the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. That is the reason why it could be said so truly of the Middle Ages that "a perfect church, within whose walls is passing the ordered pageantry unnumbered generations have built up in beauty, and through the seven arts, to do honour and reverence to the Creator and Redeemer of the world, there present in the Holy Sacrament of the altar, is the greatest work of man.

Into it enters every art raised now to the highest point of achievement, and as architecture, painting and sculpture assemble for the building of the tabernacle itself, so do music, poetry, the drama, and ceremonial gather into another great work of art, that prefigures the infinite wonder of Heaven itself." (*Cram.*)

But beautiful as were the artistic manifestations of medieval love inspired by the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, they were but the external expression of the internal beauty of souls who had made Him the centre of their lives. "In every class of life, from the king to the common soldier, in proportion as men were pure, and generous, and noble in life and death, was their faith lively, and their devotion tender, and their adoration profound towards the Holy Eucharist; whilst in proportion as their faith, and devotion, and adoration were earnest, were their lives elevated, and their deaths magnanimous." (*The History of the Holy Eucharist in Great Britain, Bridgett, p. 260.*) These are historical facts and whoever would understand the history of the Ages of Faith must know them though he may deny the articles of Faith upon which they rest. Then, as now, "It was the Blessed Eucharist that presided in the family circle at the various epochs of the lives of each, whether of joy or sorrow. It sanctified childhood at the first Communion. It blessed the marriage bond in the Nuptial Mass. It strengthened the mother before the agonies of childbirth, and sanctified her joy when her pains were over. It comforted the dying with the Holy Viaticum. It consoled and gave hope at the Requiem to the mourner in his bereavement. It marked rest from labour to the toiling. It gave the note of joy and gladness to the festival and the holiday, and it sweetly chastened the season of penance. All looked upon the Mass as the great foun-

tain of benediction from whence they might seek a supply for all their needs, not only spiritual, but also temporal, for themselves and for those dear to them." (*Ibid.*, p. 312.)

In the light of this brief review of the history of the Ages of Faith, we may be, in a measure, prepared to examine its reflection in the literature it produced. "We, who shrink from every mental effort and can be spurred to mental activity only by the prods of our comfort or our pocket-books," may also be helped toward a proper understanding of "the overflowing energy of the medieval genius, its delight in intellectuality for its own sake, its scorn of the easy and the obvious and its love for the subtle." From the midst of the smug complacency and rank materialism round about us, we may well have a prudent doubt about the wisdom and wonder of it all, for "philosophy is as old as the hills, and the science of to-day is only a new flowering of the science that made lovely the ancient cities and gardens of the East. With all our learning, we are not yet as cultured as were the Greeks who crowded to hear the plays of Sophocles; with all our art institutions, we have not yet that love for the beautiful which burned in the heart of the Middle Ages. All the problems with which we strive were long ago solved by our ancestors, only their solutions have been forgotten." (*The Story of a Success, Padraic Pearse*, p. 28.) "We are so in the habit of dwelling complacently upon the railroads, electric apparatus, machines, plumbing, and other similiar luxuries which we possess, and which obviously the Middle Ages did not possess, that we have blinded ourselves to the equally evident fact that this material progress has been accompanied by, and, in a sense, bought at the price of, the deterioration of our mental faculties." (*Beyond Architecture, Porter* p. 44.)

However, all that we have said in praise of the Ages of Faith and in criticism of the Modern Age must not be construed as indicating that the Middle Ages reached the ideal perfection of society. "No peoples as well as individuals may look back in fond recollection to the smiling years of childhood without longing to be children again. The Middle Ages are the period of our younger years; we prize them dearly as the time of our vigorous youth—a youth not made anæmic by lack of light, not corrupted in a vitiated atmosphere, but a youth which was freely and proudly developed in the air and sunlight and which produced the vigorous constitution of our present society. When we pride ourselves on our present condition, we honor the vigorous red blood of our ancestors.

"However, we must admit that our first centuries were not without the defects peculiar to all childhood. The social temperament of that young age was marked by an exuberance of spirit and a lack of discipline which frequently led to violent outbursts, and its untamed nature asserted itself even in the most beautiful manifestations of individual and public life. Our fathers were often misled by their imagination, and too often they were victims of an idealism so absolute that at times they seemed to spend their lives in dreams. They lacked confidence in their own power of mind and relied too much on the word of the preceptor; they submitted too readily to teachers who, no doubt, were worthy of respect, but who sometimes were an obstacle to initiative. Moreover, they lacked sufficient experience to appreciate at its full value the civilization they enjoyed; with a *naïveté* almost tragic they were willing to exchange their treasures for the counterfeit money of innovators of all kinds." (*What Are the Middle Ages? Kurth-Day, pp. 31-32.*)

CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT PLAGUE

THERE were, of course, many causes of the changes effected at the close of the Ages of Faith. But there is one that we must mention here for two reasons: first, it was very far-reaching in its effects, and, secondly, it is seldom mentioned by writers of text-books, except as an isolated fact, with little or no historical significance. I speak of the *great plague*, or the *black death*, as it is sometimes called. This great calamity contributed very largely toward looseness in morality and religion both in Chaucer's time and for generations afterwards. Manifestly, we are not of the number of those who make men's environment an adequate norm for judging the morality of their actions, yet we readily admit that environment plays a very important part in swaying, without necessitating man's free will. In judging the morality of human acts, we freely grant all that the term "extenuating circumstances" implies and so we cannot judge the men of Chaucer's day fairly if we ignore that widespread and awful calamity that seemed for the time to destroy the morale of nearly the whole civilized world. "The year 1348", Canon Barry tells us, "is marked as a dividing line between medieval and modern Europe: for it brought the Black Death, which swept off one-third at least of the population everywhere." (*The Papacy and Modern Times*, p. 45.)

How thoroughly justified such an estimate is in the light of historical investigation is clear from the following observations made by Cardinal Gasquet: "The simple monastic annalist of the half-buried cloister in Engleberg, the more courtly chronicler, the notary who writes with the dryness and technicalities of his profession, but displays withal a weakness for rhetoric and gossip, *littérateurs* like Boccaccio, whose *forte* is narrative, or like Petrarch, delighting in a show of words, the business-like chronicler of an Italian city, and the author who aspires to the rank of historian, the physician whose interest is professional, even the scribbler who takes this strange theme as the subject for his jingling verse, all speak with such complete oneness of expression that it would almost seem that each had copied his neighbour, and that there is here a fine theme for the scientific amusement known as 'investigation of sources'. It is only when we come to examine the whole body of evidence that there is borne in upon the mind a realisation of the nature of a calamity which, spreading everywhere, was everywhere the same in its horrors, becoming thus nothing less than a world-wide tragedy, and it is seen that even the phrases of the rhetorician can do no more than rise to the terrible reality of fact." (*The Black Death*, p. 19.)

The same distinguished authority tells us, further, that "in 1351 the whole ecclesiastical system was wholly disorganized, or, indeed, more than half ruined and that everything had to be built up anew. As regards education, the effect of the catastrophe on the body of the clergy was prejudicial beyond the power of calculation. To secure the most necessary ministrations of the rites of religion the most inadequately-prepared subjects had to be accepted, and even these could be obtained only in insufficient numbers. The

immediate effect upon the people was a religious paralysis. Instead of turning men to God, the scourge turned them to despair, and this not only in England, but in all parts of Europe. Writers of every nation describe the same dissoluteness of manners consequent upon the epidemic." (*The Black Death*, p. xxii.)

Regarding the number of deaths among the clergy, Gasquet concludes that, "in round figures, some 5,000 beneficed clergy fell victims to their duty" and that "the total death roll in the clerical order would be some 25,000." (*Ibid.*, pp. 236-7.) Among the many particular instances from which Cardinal Gasquet draws this general estimate, this one is typical: "On March 10th, 1349, in proroguing the Parliament for the second time the King declared that the plague had increased in Westminster and London more seriously than ever. Some weeks later the great monastery was attacked; early in May Abbot Bircheston died, and at the same time twenty-seven of his monks were committed to a common grave in the southern walk of the cloister." (*Ibid.*, p. 112.)

Similarly, "in the diocese of Norwich during a single twelve-month there are recorded the institution of 863 incumbents to livings vacated by the death of the previous occupant, 'the clergy dying so fast that they were obliged to admit numbers of youths that had only devoted themselves for clerks, by being shaven to be rectors of parishes.' In the county of Norfolk, out of 799 priests, 527 died of the plague; and William Bateman, the bishop, applied for and obtained from Clement VI., a bull allowing him to dispense with sixty clerks who were only 21 years of age, 'though only shavelings', and to allow them to hold rectories, as 1,000 livings had been rendered vacant by death, as otherwise service would cease altogether.

In the West Riding of Yorkshire, to take another instance, 96 priests out of 141 died; in the East Riding, out of 95, only 35 survived; and altogether it has been computed that about two-thirds of the clergy of England were carried off by the sickness.

"The monastic orders suffered with, perhaps, more severity, because the mortality was greater where numbers were gathered together. William of Worcester records in the register of Friars Minor at Bodmin, a statement that in the general chapter, held in 1351, at Lyons, it was computed that the order had lost through sickness 13,833 members in Europe."* (*Henry VIII. and Eng. Monasteries, Gasquet, Vol. I., pp. 2-3.*)

It is clear, from even this hurriedly-sketched outline of the historical facts of the times, that "absolute necessity compelled the bishops to institute young and inexperienced, if not entirely uneducated, clerics to the vacant livings, and this cannot but have its effect upon succeeding generations. The Archbishop of York sought and obtained permission from the Pope to ordain at any time and to dispense with the usual intervals between the sacred orders . . . otherwise the divine offices of the Church would cease altogether in many places of his diocese.

"'At that time', writes Knighton, the sub-contemporary canon of Leicester, 'there was everywhere such a dearth of priests that many churches were left without the divine offices, Mass, Matins, Vespers, the sacraments and sacramentals. . . . In short time, however, a large number of those whose wives had died in the pestilence came up to receive orders. Of these, many were illiterate and mere laics, except insofar as they knew how to read, although they did not under-

*Vd. Mason's *Norfolk*, p. 78, etc., and *Fortnightly Review*, vol. ii, article by Prof. Seebohm.

stand what they read.'” (*The Black Death*, pp. 238-239.)

“It need hardly be said that the scourge must have been most demoralizing to discipline, destructive to traditional practice, and fatal to observance. It is a well-ascertained fact, strange as it may seem, that men are not as a rule made better by great and universal visitations of Divine Providence. It has been noticed that this is the evident result of all such scourges, or, as Procopius puts it, speaking of the great plague in the reign of the Emperor Justinian, ‘whether by chance or Providential design, it strictly spared the most wicked.’ So in this visitation, from Italy to England, the universal testimony of those who lived through it is, that it seemed to rouse up the worst passions of the human heart, and to dull the spiritual senses of the soul. Wadding, the Franciscan annalist, has attributed to this very plague of 1348-9, the decay of fervour evident throughout his own Order at this time. ‘This evil,’ he writes, ‘wrought great destruction to the houses of religion, carrying off the masters of regular discipline and the seniors of experience. From this time the monastic Orders, and in particular the mendicants, began to grow tepid and negligent, both in that piety and that learning in which they had up to this time flourished. Then, our illustrious members being carried off, the rigours of discipline, relaxed by these calamities, could not be renewed by the youths received without the necessary training, rather to fill the empty houses than to restore the lost discipline.

“We may sum up the results of the great mortality in the words of a reliable writer. ‘For our purpose,’ writes Dr. Cunningham, ‘it is important to notice that the steady progress of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was suddenly checked in the fourteenth; the

strain of the hundred years' war would have been exhausting in any case, but the nation had to bear it when the Black Death had swept off half the population and the whole social structure was disorganised.'” (*Ibid.*, pp. 250-252.)

It should not be altogether impossible for us to imagine what all this meant to the men of the fourteenth century. The unhappy memory of post bellum “crime waves” and the excesses committed in such cities as Paris and Vienna even during the awful days of war and reconstruction, are but particular instances taken from contemporary history that illustrate with sad fidelity the general observations of Cardinal Gasquet in the passage just quoted. Such periods of world-catastrophes have ever been the most trying times for the Church and Her ministers, no less than for the State. Not infrequently, Her ministers, even in great numbers, have been found wanting and have fallen regrettably short of the high ideal proposed to them. But the Church Herself has ever emerged from such periods of trial, strong and indefectible as before. Nor can it be denied that wherever She has been suffered to exist, even under the most difficult circumstances, She has been the salt of the earth and the leaven of men's lives. This salutary influence of the Church in fashioning the lives of men, as well as Her unyielding opposition to all attempts upon Her unerring dogma and the unchangeable laws of morality, has been clearly manifest throughout the history of Christianity. Balmes expresses it well in his unsurpassed work, *Protestantism and Catholicism Compared*. He says in part, “I will not mention the saints whom She did not cease to produce during these unhappy periods: history proves their number and their virtues, which, so vividly contrasting with the corruption of the age, show that the divine flames which descended

upon the Apostles had not been extinguished in the bosom of the Catholic Church. This fact proves much; but there is another still more remarkable, a fact less subject to dispute, and which we cannot be accused of exaggerating; a fact which is not limited to individuals, but which is, on the contrary, the most complete expression of the spirit by which the whole body of the Church was animated; I mean the constant meeting of councils, in which abuses were reproved and condemned, and in which sanctity of morals and the observances of discipline were continually inculcated. Happily, this consoling fact is indisputable; it is open to every eye; and to be aware of it, one needs only to consult a volume of Ecclesiastical History, of the proceedings of the councils. There is no fact more worthy of our attention; and I will add, that perhaps all its importance has not been observed." (*p. 32.*)

"Let us remark what passes in other societies; we see that in proportion to the change of ideas and manners, laws everywhere undergo a rapid modification; and if manners and ideas come to be directly opposed to laws, the latter, reduced to silence, are soon either abolished or trodden under foot. Nothing of this sort has happened in the Church. Corruption has extended itself everywhere to a lamentable degree; the ministers of religion have allowed themselves to be carried away by the stream, and have forgotten the sanctity of their vocation; but the sacred fire did not cease to burn in the sanctuary; the law was there constantly proclaimed and inculcated; and, wonderful spectacle! the men, who themselves violated it, frequently assembled to condemn themselves, to censure their own conduct and thus to render more public and more palpable the contrast which existed between their instructions and their actions. Simony and incontinence were the prevailing vices; and if you open the canons

of councils, you will find them everywhere anathematized. Nowhere do you find a struggle so prolonged, so constant, so persevering, of right against wrong; you always see, throughout so many ages, the law, opposed face to face with the irregular passions, maintain itself firm and immovable, without yielding a single step, without allowing them a moment of repose or peace until they are subjugated." (*Ibid.*, p. 33.)

CHAPTER III.

RELIGIOUS IMPOSTORS

IT is imperative, for an intelligent understanding of our subject, that we give at least a little attention to the subject of religious frauds in the Age of Chaucer. We shall hardly find the question discussed anywhere with the frankness and fairness that characterize Jusserand's study of it. And the fact that these excellent works are at present out of print will serve as ample justification for quoting from them such lengthy excerpts as the following:

"In the fourteenth century hermits for the most part seldom sought the solitude of deserts or the depth of the woods. Such as Robert Rolle of Ham-pole, fasting, falling into ecstasies, consumed with the divine love, were rare exceptions; they lived by preference in cottages, built at the most frequented parts of the great roads or at the corners of bridges. They lived there, like Godfrey Pratt, on the charity of the passers-by; the bridge with its chapel was already almost a sacred building; the neighbourhood of the hermit sanctified it still further. He attended to the repairing of the edifice, or was supposed to do so, and was willingly given a farthing. It was a strange race of men, which in this century of disorganization and reform, in which everything seemed either to die or to undergo a new birth, increased and multiplied in spite of rules and regulations. They swelled the number of parasites of the religious edifice, sheltering under the religious habit a life that was not so. These impor-

fortunate and evil growths attached themselves, like moss in the damp of the cathedral to the fissures of the stones, and by the slow work of centuries menaced the noble edifice with ruin. What might remedy this? It was useless mowing down the ever-growing weeds; it needed a patient hand, guided by a vigilant eye, to pluck them out, one by one, and to fill up the interstices by degrees; it was a saint's business, and saints are rare. The episcopal statutes might often apparently do a great work, but it was superficial merely. Though the heads were beaten down, the roots remained, and the lively parasite struck yet deeper into the heart of the wall.

"Solemn interdictions and rigorous prescriptions were not wanting to cast down heads which ever rose again. To become a hermit a man must be resolved on an exemplary life of miseries and privations, and, that imposture might be impossible, he must have episcopal sanction, that is, possess 'testimonial letters from the ordinary.' These rules were broken without scruple. Inside his dwelling, the not very devout creature in hermit's garb might lead a pretty pleasant life, and it was so hard elsewhere! The charity of passers-by was enough to live upon, especially if he had few scruples and knew how to beg; no other labour, no pressing obligation, the bishop was distant and the tavern close by. All these reasons caused a never-ending growth of the mischievous species of false hermits who only took the habit to live by it, without asking permission of anyone. In the statutes they were bracketed with beggars, wandering labourers, and vagabonds of all kinds, who were to be imprisoned without distinction while awaiting judgment. There was only exception for 'approved' hermits: 'except men of religion and approved hermits having letters testimonial from the ordinary.' A statute like

this proves sufficiently that Langland did not exaggerate in his eloquent description of the life of the hermits. His verse is but the commentary on the law. The author of the 'Vision' is impartial and does justice to sincere anchorites: true Christians resemble them. But who are these false saints who have pitched their tent at the edge of the highroads or even in the towns, at the doors of the alehouses, who beg under the church porches, who eat and drink plentifully, and pass the evenings in warming themselves?

.....

"They are seldom seen at church, these false hermits, but they are found seated at great men's tables because their clothes are respectable; look at them eating and drinking of the best! they who formerly were of the lowest rank, at the side tables, never drinking wine, never eating white bread, without a blanket for their beds.

.....

"These rascals escaped the bishops, who ought to have had their eyes better open. 'Alas!' said a poet of the thirteenth century, Rutebeuf, in charming language, 'The coat does not make the hermit; if a man dwell in a hermitage and be clothed in hermit's dress, I don't care two straws for his habit nor his vesture if he does not lead a life as pure as his coat pretends. But many folk make a fine show and marvellous seeming what they are worth; they resemble the trees which blossom too brightly and which fail to bring forth fruit.'

"Under the eyes of the placid hermit, comfortably established at the edge of the road, under the glance of this man, who calmly prepared himself by an untroubled life without care nor suffering for a blissful eternity, flowed the changefully coloured current of

travellers, vagabonds, wayfarers, and wanderers. His benediction rewarded the generous passer; the hard look of the austere man did not suffice to disturb his blessed indifference. The life of others might rapidly consume, burnt by the sun, gnawed by care; his own endured in the shade of the trees, and continued without hurt, lulled by the rustle of human passions." (*English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages*, pp. 137-143.)

Such religious impostors, however, were not always Friars and Mendicants. There were unlicensed preachers as well, who went about the country preaching without any ecclesiastical sanction. Jusserand describes them thus: ". . . these malcontents have an austere aspect; they go 'from county to county, and from town to town in certain habits under dissimulation of great holiness.' Naturally they dispense with the ecclesiastical papers with which the regular preachers ought to be furnished; they are 'without the license of our Holy Father the Pope, or of the Ordinaries of the places, or other sufficient authority.' They preach not only in churches; they seek public places, markets, street corners where the crowd assembles 'not only in churches and churchyards, but also in markets, fairs, and other open places where a great congregation of people is.' And it is not of theology that they are willing to speak, it is truly the social question which at bottom preoccupies them; on their lips the religious sermon becomes a political harangue; 'which persons,' continues the ordinance, 'do also preach divers matters of slander, to engender discord and dissension betwixt divers estates of the said realm as well spiritual as temporal, in exciting of the people, to the great peril of all the realm.' They are cited to appear before the ecclesiastical authority, the ordinaries, but they take care not

to make submission, and refuse to 'obey to their summons and commandments.' Let the sheriffs and other king's officers henceforth watch with care these wandering preachers and send to prison those who are not in due order." (*Ibid.*, p. 281.)

Besides unapproved Friars and unauthorized preachers, there was another type of religious impostors very common in the later Middle Ages, fraudulent Pardoners who, without any ecclesiastical sanction, went about among the ignorant and credulous, plying their simoniacal trade, pretending to forgive sins in exchange for a material consideration. We assume, here, of course, that the reader understands the doctrine of the Church concerning indulgences, and the right of the Church to dispense indulgences when the conditions set down by the law of God and the law of the Church have been fulfilled. This is not the place to explain and defend the formal doctrine of the Church. Here, we are concerned only with the fraudulent dispensers of indulgences and the practice of their unholy traffic in the days of Chaucer.

"These *quaestores*, or *quaestuarii*, as they are officially called, were, so says Boniface IX., speaking at the very time that the poet wrote his tales, sometimes secular priests and sometimes friars, but extremely impudent. They dispensed with all ecclesiastical license, and went from hamlet to hamlet delivering speeches, showing their relics and selling their pardons. It was a lucrative trade, and the competition was great; the success of the authorized Pardoners had caused a crowd of interested pardoners to issue from the schools or the priory, or from mere nothingness, greedy, with glittering eyes, as in the 'Canterbury Tales': 'suche glaryng eyghen hadde he as an hare'; true vagabonds, infesters of the highroads, who, having nothing to care for, boldly carried on their im-

postor's traffic. They imposed it, spoke loud, and without scruple unbound upon earth all that might be bound in heaven. Much profit arose from this; Chaucer's Pardoner gained a hundred marks a year, which might easily be, since, having asked no authority from anyone, he gave no one any accounts, and kept all the gains to himself. In his measured language, the Pope tells us as much as the poet, and it seems as though he would recommence, feature for feature, the portrait drawn by the old story-teller. First, says the pontifical letter, these Pardoners swear that they were sent by the Court of Rome: 'Certain religious, who even belong to different mendicant orders, and some secular clerks, occasionally advanced in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, affirm that they are sent by us or by the legates or the nuncios of the apostolic see, and that they have received the mission to treat of certain affairs, . . . to receive money for us and the Roman Church, and they go about the country under these pretexts.'

.....

"'Thus', continued the Pope, 'they proclaim to the faithful and simple people the real or pretended authorizations which they have received; and irreverently abusing those which are real, in pursuit of infamous and hateful gain, consummate their impudence by attributing to themselves false and pretended authorizations of this kind.'

.....

"The effect of large parchments and large seals displayed from the pulpit scarcely ever failed upon the simple people assembled, and in many circumstances of more importance than retail selling of the merits of saints in heaven, recourse was had to such performances. Thus when Henry of Lancaster came

to turn his cousin, Richard II., out of the English throne, the first thing he did, according to Creton, was to have a papal bull carried up the pulpit of Canterbury Cathedral by the Archbishop himself, the text being read and commented upon by the prelate. As Creton was not present when this scene, which he describes only on hearsay, took place, the speech he gives is the more interesting for our purpose, for it may be considered an average speech, such a one as was usual and likely to have been pronounced on the occasion. It is to the following effect:

“‘My good people, hearken all of you here: You well know how the king most wrongfully and without reason has banished your lord Henry; I have, therefore, obtained of the holy father, who is our patron, that those who shall forthwith bring aid this day, shall every one of them have remission of all sins, whereby from the hour of their baptism they have been defiled. Behold the sealed bull that the Pope of renowned Rome hath sent me, my good friends, in behalf of you all. Agree, then, to help him to subdue his enemies, and you shall for this be placed after death with those who are in Paradise.’

“‘Then,’ continues the narrator, describing the effect of the speech, ‘might you have beheld young and old, the feeble and the strong, make a clamour, and regarding neither right nor wrong, stir themselves up with one accord; thinking that what was told them was true, for such as they have little sense or knowledge.’” (*Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages*, pp. 313-319.)

Copies of the following ecclesiastical protests against the abuses of Pardoners are given by Jusserand in Appendix XV. of his work:

Letter of Richard de Bury, 1340.

Pronouncement of the Synod of Dublin, 1348.

Bull of Urban V., 1369.

Letter of Simon Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1378.

Bull of Pope Boniface IX., 1390.

Opinion of the University of Oxford, 1414.

These are some of the more solemn and authoritative protests of the Church against an abuse frequently attributed to Her and to Her doctrine, and we have already instanced many less formal protests that were continually made against unlicensed Pardoners by those whose duty it was to safeguard and to interpret the Church's teaching. Yet, despite the strong and constant disapproval and opposition of the Church, Pardoners lingered on until the sixteenth century. Then, when Pius IV. was Pope, their death-knell was finally sounded in the Twenty-first Session of the Council of Trent, July 16, 1562. "No further hope can be entertained of emending *eleemosynarum quaestores*, the Council decreed, and, therefore, "the use of them and their name are entirely abolished henceforth in Christendom." (*Ninth Chapter of the Decree of Reform.*) True, the Church must ever regret the undoubted evils that resulted from the mendicity of fraudulent Friars, the teachings of unauthorized Preachers and the simony of unlicensed Pardoners, but these evils were always forcefully withstood by the Church in the Middle Ages, as we have seen. In our own day, none would think of blaming the police department for the importunate clamors of an unlicensed beggar; nor would any person of common sense blame the State Department for the incendiary speeches of Bolsheviki and Nihilists; nor, again, would a sensible person anathematize all dealers in antiques because he happened to be victimized in the purchase of an "antique" of very recent manufacture. Why, then, should writers continue to hold the

Church responsible for the practices of Friars and Preachers and Pardoners, which She never approved and against which She never ceased to protest?

With Kurth, we have answered the question, "What are the Middle Ages?", and we have sketched lightly and hurriedly the internal forces and their external manifestations that characterized that epoch in art, in education, and in religion. We have seen the joyousness that manifested itself on every side in those hardy days, when men toiled in the spirit of Christ and contributed all that was best to honor His earthly dwelling-place. We have followed the application of the teachings of Christ in the guilds and monasteries and even in the proper relationship between Church and State. It must now be left to the student to judge for himself and to prove by further investigation how unfounded are such critical judgments as Long's that stigmatize this epoch as one of ecclesiastical bondage, intellectual darkness and general backwardness.

In view of the historical synopsis already given, and in the light of the critical principle with which we began, — "a great book reflects the spirit of the age and the ideals of the nation's history", — it will now be easy for us to see in the works of Chaucer and Langland a reflection of the spirit of their age and its ideals. Without such a reconciliation of the history and literature of the age, an appreciation of its literary achievements must be fragmentary and superficial.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAUCEER

Then pardon, O most sacred happy spirit !
That I thy labors lost may thus revive,
And steal from thee the mead of thy due merit,
That none durst ever whilst thou wast alive,
And, being dead, in vain yet many strive:
Ne dare I like; but, through infusion sweet
Of thine own spirit, which doth in me survive,
I follow here the footing of thy feet,
That with thy meaning so I may the rather meet.

IN vain, still, do many strive after the meaning and true beauty of Chaucer's poetry, mainly because the striving is so often done by those who follow not the footing of his feet, by sympathetic study of him and of his age. "Some poets need the aid of commentators to make their phrases and illusions clear to us; Chaucer needs the aid of the sympathetic student of the fourteenth century in England, who can bring that vanished age once more about the figure of its greatest poet." (*In the Days of Chaucer, Hamilton Mabie, p. xiii.*) This is the reason why we have been at such great pains to understand the general spirit of the times before attempting to appreciate the reflection of them in the works of Chaucer. We have said very little about the forces of evil that were at work during the Ages of Faith, because we shall consider them in detail later, when they have manifested themselves more clearly in the person of Henry VIII. and his progeny. This will be done more naturally in preparing the historical setting for Shakespeare and his predecessors.

But Chaucer's work is not only "a picture of contemporary English life, its work and play, its deeds and dreams, its fun and sympathy and hearty joy of living, such as no other single work of literature has ever equalled" (*Long, p. 75*); it is, as clearly, a grand epitome of the writings of those who went before him. For "nothing is more certain than that great poets are not sudden prodigies, but slow results. As the oak profits by the foregone lives of immemorial vegetable races that have worked-over the juices of earth and air into organic life, out of whose dissolution a soil might gather fit to maintain that nobler birth of nature, so we may be sure that the genius of every remembered poet drew the forces that built it up out of the decay of a long succession of forgotten ones. Nay, in proportion as the genius is vigorous and original will its indebtedness be greater, will its roots strike deeper into the past and grope in remoter fields for the virtue that must sustain it." (*My Study Windows, Lowell, p. 235.*)

"Art is not a matter of individual creation. Without his masters and his forerunners, no poet, no artist can exist. Literature is a growth, a vast structure in whose making all writers have a hand. If the ancient writers seem to stand alone, it is only because the history of their times is unknown. Before Homer and Dante and Chaucer, there were countless robust men, without whom the great poets could not have been what they became. And, as one generation of writers pass away, they leave behind them that which will, soon or late, produce the work of their successors." (*In the Days of Chaucer, Tudor Jenks, p. 150.*) This principle of continuity in literature and history is answer enough to those who may object to our general conclusion drawn from the seemingly singular instance of Chaucer's writings.

It has been said with some truth that "for a century at least before he wrote, pilgrimages had been gradually becoming journeys rather of pleasure than of duty for those who could afford the necessary expense which they entailed." (*Chaucer and His England, Coulton, p. 138.*) Yet Chaucer himself does not speak of the pilgrimage to Canterbury as a mere medieval pleasure trip.

Thenne longen folk to go on pilgrimages,
And palmers for to seeken strange strandes,
To distant seintes, known in sondry landes;
And specially, from every shires ende
Of Engelond, to Canturbury they wende,
The holy blisful martir for to seeke,
That them that holpen when that they were weeke.

(*Prologue, ll. 12-18.*)

Again, we are told of the Knight,

For he was late come from his voyage,
And wente for to do his pilgrimage.

(*Prologue, ll. 77-78.*)

and Skeat, explaining these lines, remarks that the pilgrimage had been vowed for the Knight's safe return.

Some of the tales, however, are hardly such as we should expect to hear from pilgrims even in the literal days of Chaucer and they undoubtedly reflect a very worldly spirit. But prescinding from such inconsistencies as are condoned largely by the bluntness of speech characteristic of the times, Chaucer exhibited rare wisdom in selecting a pilgrimage as the background of his poem. For a pilgrimage puts his characters, socially unequal, "on a plane where all men are equal, with souls to be saved, and with another world in view that abolished all distinctions." (*My Study Windows, Lowell, p. 288.*) How impossible it would be to-day to imagine a company representing

our various classes, jaunting merrily along, exchanging stories, bent on a common mission on common ground! Yet this is the Age of Democracy, we claim, and of the abolition of class distinctions!

It is true that the mere fact that Chaucer selected a pilgrimage as the natural setting for his poem goes far toward helping us see in it a reflection of the times, but the added fact that the pilgrimage, as most of them, was made to Canterbury, is more than significant of the medieval temper. A people honors the heroes of the past who, in life, lived up to the ideals that it holds dearest. To-day, we cherish our liberty, as we do our lives, and we honor those who first delivered us from foreign oppression: we hold our national honor a sacred thing and we pay homage to him who delivered our nation from the stigma of slavery. In the Ages of Faith, the people paid national homage to a man who was a prelate, priest, patriot and martyr, and we justly conclude that they were a Catholic people, lovers of liberty and devout. That Saint Thomas of Canterbury was a priest and prelate is evident. That he was a patriot is abundantly proved from the facts of history, if to suffer and die for a people's rights is to be a patriot.

"A species of tax had sprung up through custom", Fr. Morris tells us, "which, in its origin, seems to have been little else than a kind of blackmail. It consisted of two shillings on every hide of land, which was paid to the sheriffs, on condition that they should defend the contributors from the exactions of their subordinates. At a council held at the royal palace of Woodstock, the King demanded that this tax should, for the future, be paid into the treasury, by which means a very large revenue would be obtained. None dared to speak but the Archbishop (St. Thomas of Canterbury), who firmly but quietly told the King

that the tax in question was but a voluntary offering, which his sheriffs should receive as long as they did their duty, but, if they did not do so, it should not be paid; and by no law could its collection be enforced. The King, in one of his sudden and characteristic fits of anger, exclaimed, 'By God's eyes, it shall be enrolled.' St. Thomas answered, 'By the reverence of those eyes, by which thou hast sworn, my lord King, not a penny shall be paid from the lands!'" (*Life of St. Thomas Becket, Morris, p. 112.*)

"This is the first case", says Stubbs, "of any opposition to the King's will in the matter of taxation which is recorded in our national history; and it would seem to have been, formally at least, successful." (*Constitutional History of England, Vol. I., p. 463.*) The awful price of this success was exile from his native land; the spectacle of his nearest kin wandering homeless over the earth, and, finally, death at the hands of assassins. The appeal of the life and death of such a man to the people of medieval England speaks more eloquently than volumes, their love of liberty and of holiness and their scorn of even the might of kings that has triumphed over right. It was this love that prompted them to lavish with matchless wealth and beauty the tomb that enshrined the earthly remains of "the holy blisful martir," until, in 1500, it had reached the height of its splendor as it is described in a relation of England under Henry VII., published by the Camden Society: "The tomb of St. Thomas the Martyr, Archbishop of Canterbury, exceeds all belief. Notwithstanding its great size, it is all covered with plates of pure gold; yet the gold is scarcely seen, because it is covered with various precious stones, as sapphires, diamonds, rubies and emeralds; and, wherever the eye turns, something more beautiful than the rest is observed. Nor, in addi-

tion to these natural beauties, is the skill of art wanting; for in the midst of the gold are the most beautiful sculptured gems, both small and large, as well as such as are in relief, as agates, onyxes, cornelians, and cameos; and some cameos are of such size that I am afraid to name it; but everything is far surpassed by a ruby, not larger than a thumb nail, which is fixed at the right of the altar. The church is somewhat dark, and particularly in the spot where the shrine is placed; and when we went to see it, the sun was near setting and the weather was cloudy: nevertheless, I saw that ruby as if I had it in my hand. They say it was given by a King of France." (*Cf. Morris, pp. 481-482.*)

Such were the riches heaped up by the largess of medieval England to the honor of one who had suffered and died for his people. And this great monument endured with ever-increasing magnificence until the lustful eyes of Henry VIII. looked upon it and decreed that "Thomas, sometime Bishop of Canterbury, had been guilty of contumacy, treason, rebellion; that his bones should be publicly burnt, to admonish the living of their duty by the punishment of the dead; and that the offerings made at his shrine should be forfeited to the Crown." (*Morris, pp. 483-485.*) But that was at a later day, the beginning of England's "emancipation." In Chaucer's time,

from every shires end
Of Engelond, to Canturbury they wende,
The holy blisful martir for to seeke,
That them that holpen when that they were weeke.

Yet the coming events of Henry's time had cast their shadows ahead and they had not escaped the discerning eye of Chaucer:

A MONK ther was, wel fit for sovereyntee,
An out-rydere, that lovèd venerye;

A manly man, to be an abbot able.
Ful many a dainty hors had he in stable:
And whan he rode, men might his bridel here
Jyngle in a whistlyng wynd so cleere,
And eek as loude as doth—the chapel belle.
Where that this lord was keper of the celle,
The rule of seynt Maure or of seint Beneyt,
Bycause that it was old and somewhat streyt,
This ilke monk let pass the olde day,
And helde after the newe time alway.
He gaf nat for that text a pulled hen,
That seith, that hunters be no holy men;
Nor that a monk, when he is cloysterless,
Is likened to a fissue that is watirless,
This is to sey, a monk out of his cloystre.
But that same text held he not worth an oystre.
And I seide his opinioun was good.
Why! shulde he studie, and make himselve wood,
Uppon a book in cloystre alway to pore,
Or diggen with his handes, and laboure,
As Austyn bad? How shal the world be served?
Lat Austyn have his toil to him reserved.
Therefore a horsman ever he was aright;
Greyhoundes he had as swifte as fowl in flight;
Of prickyng and of huntyng for the hare
Was his delight, for no cost wolde he spare.
I saw his sleeves rounded at the hand
With fur, and that the fynest in the land.
And for to fastne his hood under his chyn
He hadde of gold y-wrought a curious pyn:
A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.
His heed was bald, and shon as eny glas,
And eek his face as he had been anynt.
He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;
His eyen bright, and rollyng in his heed,
That stemèd al as doth a furnace red;
His bootes souple, his hors in gret estate.
Now certainly he was a fair prelate;
He was not pale as a for-pynèd ghost.
A fat swan loved he best of eny roast.
His palfray was as broun as is a berye.

(*The Prologue*, ll. 165-207.)

But mark it well. This monk, with his wealth of horses and love of pleasure, was no product of mediæval Catholicism. Rather, he was born before his time, — a laggard in the observance of the rule he had willingly embraced and had vowed to observe; a real *reformer*, for he rejected all this simply *Bycause that it was old and somewhat streyt*.

A Frere there was, too, among the pilgrims, of much the same type as the monk:

A FRERE ther was, a wanton and a merye,
 A prechour, and a ful solemne man.
 In alle the ordres foure is non that can
 So moche of daliaunce and fair langáge.
 He had i-made many a mariáge
 Of yonge wymmen, at his owne cost.
 Unto his ordre he was a noble post.
 Ful wel biloved and familiar was he
 With frankeleyns everywhere in his cuntree,
 And eek with worthi wommen of the toun:
 For he hadde power of confessioun,
 As seyde himself, more than a curáte,
 For of his ordre he was licenciát.
 Ful sweetly herde he their confessioun,
 And pleasant was his absolucioún;
 He was an esy man to geve penance
 When that he thought to have a good pitance
 For unto a poore ordre for to give
 Is signe that a man is wel i-shrive.
 For if he gaf, he dorste make avaunt,
 He wiste that a man was répentaúnt.
 For many a man so hard is of his herte,
 He may not wepe though he sore smerte.
 Therefore in-stede of wepyng and prayéres,
 Men may give silver to the pore freres.
 His typet was ay stuffed ful of knyfes
 And pynnes, for to give to faire wyfes.
 And certaynly he hadde a mery note.
 Wel could he synge and pleyen on a flute.
 Of songes he bar utterly the price.
 His nekke whit was as the fluer-de-lys.
 Therto he strong was as a champioun.

He knew the tavernes wel in every toun,
 And every ostiller or gay tapstere,
 Better than lazars or the pore beggere,
 For unto such a worthi man as he
 It was not right, as by his facultee,
 To have with such sick lazars áqueyntaúnce.
 It is not honest, it may not advaunce,
 For a good Frere to dele with such poraile,
 But al with riche and sellers of vitaille,
 And specially when profyt shulde arise.
 Curteous he was, and gentil of servyse.
 Ther was no man nowher so vertuous.
 He was the beste begger in al his hous,
 For though a widewe hadde but one shoe,
 So plesaunt was his *In principio*,
 Yet wolde he have a ferthing ere he wente.
 His begging was far better than his rente.
 And rage he coude and pleye right as a whelpe,
 In love-dayes coude he people helpe.
 For then was he not like a cloysterer,
 With a thredbare cope as a pore scolér,
 But he was like a maister or a pope.
 Of double worsted was his semy-cope,
 That round was, as a belle, out of the presse.
 Somwhat he lipped, for his wantounesse,
 To make his Englissh swete upon his tunge;
 And in his harpyng, when that he hadde sunge,
 His eyen twynkled in his hed aright,
 As do the sterres in the frosty night.
 This worthi prechour was y-called Huberd.

(*The Prologue*, ll. 208-271.)

But Chaucer knew and his readers knew that there was nothing in the Catholic Faith nor in the rule of Saint Francis more than in

The rule of seynt Maure or of seint Beneyt,
 to justify his ways in the sight of either God or man.
 His was a worldly spirit to the degree in which he
 had rejected the ideal of his Faith and rule as had his
 fellow monk,

Because that it was old and somewhat streyt.

But Chaucer did not conclude the degeneration of all from the remissness of a few and then rant against the Church itself. He tells us plainly,

But to correcten that is amiss i-ment.

(l. 1000, *The Canones Yeomans Tale.*)

In every ordre som shrewe is, pardee;
 And God forbede that al a companye
 Be blamed for a singuler mannes folye,
 ye wot well how
 That among Cristes apostelles twelve
 Ther was no traytour but Judas himselve;
 Than why shulde al the remenaunt have a blame,
 That giltless were? to you I say the same. (*Ibid.*)

Unlike professional reformers, "Chaucer can expose and denounce hypocrisy without losing his reverence for true religion; he can point out evils in social life, without siding wholly with nobles or people." *Chaucer and His Times, Grace Hadow, p. 220.*) As Tudor Jenks expresses it, "the clear-minded Chaucer saw both the good and the evil in the institutions of his time; and by means of setting before us the good churchman and the bad, the noble knight and the unchivalrous soldier, he shows the strength and the weakness of both systems". (*In the Days of Chaucer, p. 126.*) But his critics and commentators have not always been as clear-sighted and discriminating as Chaucer himself. True, "under Edward III., the poison in the blood which finally made the English nation, or, rather, the heads of the nation, delirious under Henry VIII. had already begun to work; and the poet's quick insight into the abuses which were sapping the spiritual strength of the people have caused superficial critics who seem to imagine that the Reformers discovered religion, as Mme. de Stael imagined she had discovered virtue, to set down Chaucer

as a Wyclifite. But an impartial examination of the portions of his writings, which induced even the amiable Miss Mitford to applaud him for his Protestant tendencies, will show that Chaucer, like all true Catholics of his time, saw that pride and luxury, sloth and simony, hiding under the desecrated cloak of religion, were separating the threads of the sacred garment." (*Chaucer and His Circle, Catholic World, August, 1880.*)

Again, "the extraordinary enrolment of Chaucer among the Spiritual Fathers of the English Reformation was principally based upon the spurious tale of the Plowman. The belief long survived the evidence to which it owed its origin." (*Studies in Chaucer, Lounsbury, Vol. II., p. 465.*) "No one since Tyrwhitt's denial of its authenticity has ventured to include the *Plowman's Tale* among Chaucer's writings. It no longer appears in any edition of his works. The belief that was born of it, therefore, ought to have died with it. Yet, later ages that have refused to accept the poem as genuine have followed former ages in accepting the view of his opinions which the rejected poem had the principal influence in building up and projecting." (*Ibid., p. 466.*)

The conclusions concerning Chaucer's Protestantism, drawn from his vulgar presentation of the Summoner, are still less founded than those we have already discussed. "A Summoner," Skeat tells us, "was an officer employed to summon delinquents to appear in ecclesiastical courts", and, consequently, he was looked upon by the men of his day much as a process-server is looked upon to-day. It is quite natural, therefore, that Chaucer, in depicting one whose duties at best would make him generally unpopular, pictured him after the fashion with which we are familiar.

The character of the Pardoner, however, is clearly connected with things more intimately religious than mere summonses to appear before an ecclesiastical court. He tells his dupes,

Myn holy pardoun may you alle suffice,
So that ye give nobles or coin sterling,
Or else a silver spone, a broche, or ryng,
Bow down your heads under this holy bulle.

(*Pardoner's Tale*, ll. 906-909.)

And there are historians who ask us to believe that this practice of granting absolution in return for monies was approved by the medieval Church and presented to us by Chaucer as a tenet of the Catholic Faith. Nothing is farther from the truth. True, in the Ages of Faith, as now, the economic principle of supply and demand led to fraudulent abuses. The people's reverence and desire for relics and indulgences led to the manufacture of relics and the forgery of Papal Bulls to meet the demand. In our more material age, and equally credulous, the supply of counterfeits is likewise governed by the demand, and so we have watered stock and fake bonds, not to mention mountains of modern "relics," such as furniture that came over in the *Mayflower*, which, by the way, must have been quite a freighter, if all the colonial appointments that are said to have come over in it are genuine.

Chaucer, as most intelligent Catholics of his day, was not confused by the counterfeiting round about him. The simony of Pardoners, for instance, did not blind him to the true teaching of the Church regarding the remission of sins, and he set it down plainly in the *Persones Tale*. "For understonde wel, that after the tyme that a man hath defouled his baptisme by synne, if he wol come to salvacioun, there is noon

other way but penitence and shrifte of mouth, and by satisfaccioun; and namely by these two, if ther be a confessour to which he may shryve him, and the thridde if ye have lif to parforme it." (*No. 86.*) And, again, more plainly still, we read, "And right so as contricioun availith nat withoute firm purpos of shrifte if man have opportunitie, right so litil worth is shrifte or satisfaccioun withoute contricioun." (*No. 15.*) Such is the doctrine of the Catholic Church to-day and such it was in Chaucer's day, as he would have us infer, from the fact that practices to the contrary are attributed to the avaricious Pardoner, to the renegade Monk and the worldly Friar, while the lines just quoted are spoken by one who was the personification of Catholic belief and practice, the Parson. That is why we justly claim him as a product of the Catholic Age in which he lived, while we disclaim as products of that same age his contemporaries, the Monk, the Friar, and the Pardoner, whose unevangelical lives could find no justification, but only unequivocal condemnation, in the authoritative pronouncements of the Church.

A good man was ther of religioun,
 And was a poore PARSON of a town;
 But riche he was of holy thought and werk.
 He was also a lerned man, a clerk
 That Cristes gospel gladly wolde preach;
 His parishioners devoutly wolde he teach.
 Benigne he was, and wondrous diligent,
 And in adversitee ful pacient;
 And such he was i-provèd ofte to be.
 To cursen for his tithes ful lothe was he,
 But rather wolde he given out of doute,
 Unto his pore parishioners aboute,
 Of his offrynge, and eek of his substaunce.
 He coude in litel thing have suffeience.
 Wyd was his parish, and houses far asonder,

But yet he lasfe not for reyne or thonder,
 In siknesse and in meschief to visíte
 The ferthest in his parisshe, smal and great
 Uppon his feet, and in his hand a staf.
 This noble ensample unto his sheep he gaf,
 That ferst he wroughte, and after that he taughte,
 Out of the gospel he those wordes caughte,
 And this figúre he addid yet therto,
 That if gold ruste, what shulde iron do?
 For if a priest be foul, on whom we truste,
 No wonder if the ignorant shulde ruste;
 And shame it is, if that a priest take kepe,
 A dirty shepperd and a clene shepe;
 Wel oughte a priest ensample for to give,
 By his clenness, how that his sheep shulde lyve.
 He sette not his benefice to hire,
 And lefte his sheep encombred in the myre,
 And ran to Londone, unto seynte Paules,
 To seeken him a chaunterie for soules,
 Or with a brothurhood to be withholde;
 But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,
 So that the wolfe made it not myscarye.
 He was a shepperde and no mercenarie;
 And though he holy were, and vertuous,
 He was to sinful man ful piteous,
 Nor of his speche wrathful nor yet fine,
 But in his teching dícret and benigne.
 To drawe folk to heven by clenenesse,
 By good ensample, was his busynesse:
 But were it eny person obstinat,
 What-so he were of high or lowe estat,
 Him wolde he snubbe sharply for the nonce.
 A better priest I trowe ther nowher non is.
 He wayted after no pompe nor reverence,
 Nor made himself spicèd in conscience,
 But Cristes love, and his apostles twelve,
 He taught, and ferst he folwed it himselve.

(*The Prologue*, ll. 477-528.)

Among layfolk, as well as among those who were
 called to follow the counsels, the salutary influence of
 the Church was equally manifest, but in none of

Chaucer's characters was it more conspicuous than in the Knight:

A KNIGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,
 That from the tyme that he ferst bigan
 To ryden out, he lovèd chyvalrye,
 Trouth and honoúr, fredóm and curtesie.
 Ful worthi was he in his Lordes warre,
 And thereto had he riden, noman so farre,
 As wel in Cristendom as hethenesse,
 And ever honoured for his worthinesse.
 At Alisandre he was when it was wonne,
 Ful ofte tyme he hadde the feast begunne
 Aboven alle the Knights that were in Pruce.
 In Lettowe had he ridden and in Ruce
 No cristen man so ofte of his degree.
 In Gernade at the siege eek had he be
 Of Algesir, and riden in Belmarie.
 At Lieys was he, and at Satalie,
 When they were wonne; and in the Grete see
 At many a noble landyng had he be.
 At mortal batailles had he been fiftene,
 And foughten for oure feith at Tramassene
 In lystes thrice, and ever slayn his foe.
 This same worthi knight had ben also
 Somtyme with the lord of Palatye,
 Ageynst another hethen in Turkye:
 And evermore he hadde a sovereyn price.
 And though that he was worthy he was wyse,
 And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
 He never yet no vilonye had sayde
 In al his lyf, unto no manner of wight.
 He was a very perfit gentil knight.
 But for to telle you of his array,
 His hors was good, but yet he was not gay.
 Of fustyan he ware a cote pleyn
 Whereon his hauberk left ful many a stain.
 For he was late come from his voyáge,
 And wente for to do his pilgrimáge.

(*The Prologue*, ll. 43-78.)

"It deserves, in truth, special notice," Schofield tells us, "how much Chaucer's portrait of the ideal

Knight resembles in fundamental nature his portrait of the ideal Parson. 'Rich in holy thought and work', though lowly of estate, the Parson was as faithful a knight of peace as his higher-born companion a knight of war. Many times in adversity, he had proved himself worthy of his Master in Heaven. He fulfilled, in his own domain, every demand of chivalrous precept — 'trouth and honour, fredom and curtesie!' He, too, 'waited after no pomp or reverence.' By his demeanour, he commended his profession. Both the Parson and his brother the Plowman, because they followed so closely in the footsteps of Christ, Chaucer pictures as 'gentles of honour'; they had 'gentillesse of grace.'

"We fail wholly to realize the significance of Chaucer's exaltation of the Knight if we do not observe that he was not simply a man of great physical courage and brilliant achievement in war, but the embodiment of very high spiritual excellence. 'Blessed are the meek', says the Gospel, and the Knight is nobly meek. He is Christ-like in his behaviour to his fellows. His chivalry is religious through and through. Not in vain had he vowed his vow, when dubbed, faithfully to serve God and Holy Church." (*Chivalry in English Literature, Schofield, p. 35.*)

Again, the picture which Chaucer gives us of the Clerk, or medieval university student, forms none too favorable a contrast with the students of to-day, as modern writers are fond of portraying them:

A CLERK ther was of Oxenford also,
That unto logik had long tyme i-go.
As lene was his hors as is a rake,
And he was not right fat, I undertake;
But lokede hollow, and therto soberly.
Ful thredbare was his overest cloke to see,
For he hadde nought gotten him a benefice,

Nor was so worldly to have high office.
 For he wold rather have at his beddes hed
 Twenty bookes, clothed in blak and red,
 Of Aristotil, and his philosophie,
 Then robes riche, or fiddle, or psaltery.
 But although that he were a philosóphre,
 Yet had he but a litul gold in cofre;
 But al that he might gete, and his frendes sent,
 On bookes and his lernyng he it spent,
 And busily gan for the soules pray
 Of them that gaf him money to scolay.
 Of studie tooke he most cure and most heede.
 Not one word spak he more than was need;
 Al that he spak it was of heye prudence,
 And short, and quyk, and ful of gret sentence.
 Sowndynge in moral vertu was his speche,
 And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

(*The Prologue*, ll. 285-308.)

From the numerous class of laborers in the fields,
 Chaucer gives us a type in the Plowman:

A trewe worker and a good was he,
 Lyvyng in pees and perfit charitee.
 God loved he best with al his trewe herte
 At alle tymes, though he laughed or smerte,
 And thenne his neighebour right as himselve.
 He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,
 For Cristes sake, with every pore wight,
 Withouten hyre, if it laye in his might.
 His tythes payed he ful faire and wel,
 Bothe by his owne work and his catel.
 In a round coat he rode upon a mare.

(*The Prologue*, ll. 529-541.)

In these few lines, we find the supernatural motive
 of the Catholic Faith that has lightened labor and
 dignified the laborer since:

The highe God, on whom that we believe,
 In wilful poverte chose to lede his life.

(*Tale of Wyf of Bathe*, ll. 533-534.)

At a time when every Christian might say,

Than am I gentil, whan that I bygynne
To live vertuously, and to leven synne,

(*Ibid.*, ll. 320-321.)

we are not surprised to discover souls of the type we have just seen, who reflect so clearly the teachings of Christ, but we are not altogether prepared to find much real tenderness of heart and refinement of manners. Yet the Prioress, as depicted by Chaucer, is distinguished for her nicety of external deportment no less than for her sensitiveness:

Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,
That of her smylyng was ful symple and coy;
Her grettest oth was only—by seynt Loy;
And she was namèd madame Englentyne.
Ful wel she sang the servises divyne,
Entunèd in her nose ful seemely;
And Frensh she spake ful faire and sweetely,
After the scole of Stratford-atte-Bowe,
For Frensh of Parys was to her unknowe.
At mete wel i-taught was she in all;
She let no morsel from her lippes falle,
Nor wet her fyngres in her sauce deepe.
Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel keepe,
That never drope upon her brest should be.
For al her thoughte was sett on curtesie.
Her overlippe wypèd she so clene,
That in her cuppe was no ferthing sene
Of greese, when she dronken hadde withinne.
Ful semely to ete she did beginne.
And certeynly she was of gret disport,
And ful plesánt, and amyable of port,
And peynèd her to counterfete cheere
Of court, and to be stately of manére,
And to be holden digne of reverence.
But for to speken of her conscience,
She was so charitable and so piteous,
She wolde weepe if that she saw a mous
Caught in a trappe, if it were ded or bledde.

Of smale houndes had she, that she fedde
 With rosted flessh, and mylk, and wastel breed.
 But sore wepte she if one of them were ded,
 Or if men smote it with a stikke smerte:
 And al was conscience and tendre herte.
 Ful semely her cloke i-pynchèd was;
 Her nose streight; her eyen grey as glas;
 Her mouth ful smal, and therto soft and red;
 But certeynly she hadde a fair forheed.
 It was almost a spanne broad, I trowe:
 For verrily she was not undergrowe.
 Ful faire was her robe, as I was war.
 Of smal corál aboute her arme she bare
 A paire of bedes, the greatest were of grene;
 And theron hung a broch of gold ful shene,
 On which was first i-writ a crownèd A,
 And after, *Amor vincit omnia*.

(*The Prologue*, ll. 118-162.)

Coulton, commenting upon this description of the Prioress, speaks of "Madam Englentyne and her fellow nun", as being "clean and demure, like a pair of aristocratic pussy-cats on a drawing-room hearth-rug." (*Chaucer and His England*, p. 147.) Such a simile needs no comment. There is nothing in the text to prompt it, and it really looks like a bit of smart writing.

In our sketch of the historical background, we mentioned the growing respect in which women were held in medieval times, and we attributed it to the universal devotion paid to a woman honored above all the children of man, Mary, Mother of God.

Thou mayde and moder, doughter of thi sone,
 Thou welle of mercy, synful soules cure,
 Whom that heigh God in bountee chose allone;
 Humblest and best of every créature,
 Thou didst enoble so far our natúre,
 That no disdeyn the maker had of kynde
 His son in blood and flessh to clothe and wind.

Withinne the cloyster of thi blisful sydes,
 Took mannes shape the eternal love and peace,
 That of the triple compas lord and guyde is,
 The lord whom erthe and heven, land and seas
 Ay praisen; and thou, virgine spotteless,
 Bare of thy body, and dwellest mayden pure,
 The créatoúr of every créature.

Assembled is in thee magnificence
 With mercy, goodnes, and with such pitee,
 That thou, that art the summe of excellence,
 Not only helpist them that prayen thee,
 But ofte tyme of thy benignitee
 Ful frely, ere that men thin help beseech.
 Thou goest bifore, and art their lives leech.

(*The Seconde Nonnes Tale*, ll. 36-56.)

Such matchless beauty of honor and praise was not without its complement in the medieval ideal of womanhood as portrayed in Chaucer's concept of the maiden daughter of the Knight Virginus:

This mayde was of age twelf yer and twaye,
 In which that nature hadde suche delite.
 For right as she can peynte a lili white
 And ruddy a rose, right with such peynture
 She peynted hath this noble créature
 Er she was born, upon her limbes free,
 Where as by right such coloures shulde be;
 And Phebus deyed hadde hire tresses bright,
 I-lyk the stremes of his burning light.
 And if that excellent was hir beautee,
 A thousand fold more vertuous was she.
 In hir there lakketh no condicioun,
 That hath ben prayed by mens discrecioun.
 As wel in body as soule chaste was she;
 For which she flourèd in virginitee,
 With alle humilitee and abstinence,
 With alle temperaunce and patience,
 With modest look and bearyng and array.
 Discret she was in answeyng alway,
 Though she were wis as Pallas, dar I sayn.
 Hir spekyng was full womanly and playn;

No countrefeted termes hadde she
 To seeme wys; but after hir degree
 She spak and alle hir wordes more and lesse
 Sounyng in vertu and in gentillesse.
 Shamefast she was in maydenes shamfastnesse,
 Constant in hert, and ever in besynesse,
 To dryve hir out of ydelle slogardye.
 Bacchus had of hir mouth no maistrye;
 For wyn and youthe doon Venús encrece,
 As when men in the fyr caste oyle or grece.
 And of hir owne vertu unconstrained,
 She hath ful ofte tyme sickness feyned,
 For that she wolde flee the companye,
 Wher likly was to treten of folye,
 As is at festes, reveles, and at daunces,
 That be occasiouns of daliaunces.

(*The Tale of the Doctor of Phisik*, ll. 30-66.)

Even regarding the question of woman's real rights, Chaucer and his age were far from backward: "Also certes, God made nought womman of the foot of Adam, for she ne sholde nought be holden too lowe, for she can not paciently suffre. But God made womman of the ribbe of Adam, for womman shulde be felawe unto man. Man shulde bere him to his wyf in faith, in trouthe, and in love; as seint Poule, that a man shulde love his wyf, as Crist loved holy church, that loved it so wele that he deyede for it; so shulde a man for his wyf, if it were need." (*The Persones Tale*, No. 75.)

Again,

"God of his grate goodnes sayde thanne,
 Let us now make an helpe to this manne
 Lyk to himself; and than he made Eve.
 Her may ye see, and here may ye preve
 That wyf is mannes help and his comfort,
 His paradise terrestre and his desport."

(*The Marchaundes Tale*, ll. 91-96.)

And finally,

“but in good sothfastnesse,
Though clerkes prayse wommen but a lite,
Ther can no man in humblesse him acypte
As wommen can, nor can be half so trewe
As wommen be, save it be something newe.”

(*Clerkes Tale, closing lines.*)

Besides these unsurpassed tributes to woman in general, there are the lovely creatures of Chaucer's imagination, — Griselda, Constance and Emelye. Yet there are critics of Chaucer and of his time who tell us that “in the literature of the Middle Ages, it cannot be truthfully maintained that many admiring tributes are paid to woman as woman.” (*Studies in Chaucer, Lounsbury, Vol. II., p. 361.*) The opposite conclusion, surely, is the only one that can be drawn from a studious consideration of medieval history and literature, especially of Chaucer. The reason for this fact we have already indicated, and it is summed up well by Arthur Burrell in the introduction to his edition of the *Canterbury Tales*: “All good women are to Chaucer reflections of the Virgin Mary, who is ‘the lady bright’, ‘the haven of refuge’, the ‘bright star of the day’, the ‘glory of motherhood.’ She is eternal womanhood in heaven. The *Clerkes Tale* alone lifts the woman of the Middle Ages above the elegancies of Herrick, above the passion of Byron, above the calm honours of Tennyson, and the critical or whole-hearted admiration of Browning. Not even in Shakespeare do we find such abandonment of worship as we do here. Women have not yet learnt to study the women of Chaucer, their own poet, their defender, and their glory. If apology be needed for the poet's coarseness, let the white figures of Constance¹,

1. *The Man of Lawes Tale.*

Emelye², and Griselda³ atone." (*Everyman's Library Edition*, pp. xiv-xv.) Add to this the fact that the Miller and Reve, singers of "synne and harlotries", are boldly stigmatized as "churls", and unsympathetically treated and, finally, recall Chaucer's prayer for pardon for his lapses, and we have atonement, ample as man can make it, for his faults.

PRECES DE CHAUCERES

Now pray I to yow alle that heren this litel tretis or reden it, that if ther be any thing in it that liketh them, that therof thay may thanke oure Lord Jhesu Crist, of whom procedith alle witte and al goodnes; and if ther be eny thing that displesith them, I pray them that thay arette it to the defaulte of myn unconnyng, and not to my wille, that wolde fayn have sayd better if I hadde connyng; for the book saith, al that is writen for oure doctrine is writen, and that is myn entent. Wherefore I biseke yow mekely for the mercy of God that ye praye for me, that God have mercy on me and forgeve me my giltes, and nameliche of my translaciouns and endityng in worldly vanitees, whiche I revoke in my retracciouns, as is . . . the *Tales of Caunturbury*, alle thilke that sounen into synne, the book of the Leo, and many other bokes, if thay were in my mynde or remembraunce, and many a song and many a lecherous lay, of the whiche Crist for his grete mercy forgive me the synnes. But of the translacioun of Boce de consolacioun, and other bokes of consolacioun and of legend of lyves of seints, and Omelies, and moralitees, and of devocioun, that thanke I oure Lord Jhesu Crist, and his moder, and alle the seintes in heven, bisekyng them that thay fro hennysforth unto my lyves ende sende me grace to biwayle my giltes, and to studien to the salvacioun of my soule, and graunte me grace and space of verray repentaunce, penitence, confessioun, and satisfacioun, to don in this present lif, thurgh the benigne grace of him, that is king of kynges and prest of alle prestis, that bought us with his precious blood of his hert, so that I may be one of them at the day of doom that shal be saved; *qui cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto vivis et regnas Deus per omnia secula*. Amen.

(Conclusion of *The Canterbury Tales*.)

2. *The Knights Tale*.

3. *The Clerkes Tale, Pars Secunda*.

There are critics who admit that "there is, to be sure, no actual evidence to decide in either way the question as to the genuineness of this Prayer", but who, betraying their unconquerable prejudice, conclude that "it would be unbearable to have to accept it as genuine." (*Chaucer, Ward, pp. 141-142.*) "Unbearable", indeed, for those who cannot bear the truth that Chaucer was Catholic to the core; "unbearable", too, to those who pass over the depth of devotion to Mary bared in Chaucer's lines and with pathetic ingenuity would explain his holding her rosary in his hand, as *possibly* "significant of the piety attributed to him by Occleve or else a mere ordinary accompaniment of conversation, as it is in Greece to the present day." (*Ibid., p. 144.*) Fancy the Rosary of Our Lady being "a mere ordinary accompaniment of conversation," in the Ages of Faith that gave us Dominic and that, in the hands of one with whom we associate deep piety and devotion to Our Blessed Lady, not because it has been attributed to him by others, but because it overflows so plenteously from his writings. In the absence of "actual evidence to decide it either way", and happily, too, in the absence of any unbearable aversion born of prejudice, we gladly incline to accept the reputed *Prayer of Chaucer* as genuine, and to it we reverently add our own "Amen."

CHAPTER V.

LANGLAND

PASSING now to a brief consideration of one of the other distinguished writers of the Chaucerian Age, we shall borrow from Jusserand the description of how the work of Langland supplements the work of Chaucer as a reflex of the times.

“The ideas of the greatest number, and average English opinion, find in the *Visions* an echo or a commentary that they had nowhere else at that time. Chaucer, with his genius and his many qualities, his gaiety and his gracefulness, his faculty of observation, and that apprehensiveness of mind which enables him to sympathise with the most diverse specimens of humanity, has drawn an immortal and incomparable picture of medieval England. In certain respects, however, the description is incomplete, and one must borrow from Langland the finishing touches.

“We owe to Chaucer’s horror of vain abstractions, the picturesque individuality of each one of his personages; all classes of society are represented in his works; but the types which impersonate them are so clearly characterised, their singleness is so marked, that, on seeing them, we think of them alone and of no one else; individuals occupy all the foreground, and the background of the canvas disappears; we are so absorbed in the contemplation of this or that man, that we think no more of the class, the ensemble, the nation.

“The active and actual passions of the multitude, the subterranean lavas which simmer beneath a brittle crust of good order and regular administration, all the latent possibilities of volcanoes which this inward fire represents, are, on the contrary, always present to the mind of our visionary. Rumbblings are heard, and herald an earthquake. The vehement and passionate England that produced the great revolt of 1381 and the heresy of Wyclif, that later on will give birth to Cavaliers and Puritans, is contained in essence in Langland’s work; we divine, we foresee her. Chaucer’s book is, undoubtedly, not in contradiction to that England, but it screens and allows her to be forgotten.

“Multitudes, like men, have their individuality. It seems as if Chaucer had, in depicting his characters, expended all his gift of individualising. His horror of abstractions does not extend to multitudes; his multitudes are abstract ones. Excepting two or three profound observations, such as a man of his genius could not fail to make, he shows us the mass of humanity changeable, uncertain, ‘unsad, untrue’: remarks applicable to the crowds of all times and recorded in the work of all authors.

“From that point of view, Langland is very different from his illustrious contemporary. He excels in the difficult art of conveying the impression of a multitude, not of an indistinct or abstract multitude, motionless, painted on the back scene of his stage and fit to serve for any play; his crowds of human beings have a character and temper of their own; he does not stop long to describe them; still, we see them; when they are absent from the stage, we hear them in the distance; we feel their approach. They are not any crowd, they are an English crowd; in spite of the wear

and tear of time, we still discern their features, as we do those of the statues on old tombs. Their enthusiasm, their anger, their bursts of joy are in unison with those of to-day; we can intermingle old and new feelings, and there will be differences of degrees, but no discord. It needs little imagination to trace in the *Visions* sketches recalling the gravity of a modern crowd listening in the open air to a popular orator, or the merriment of a return from Epsom. In their anger, Chaucer's people exchange blows on the highway; Langland's crowds, in their anger, sack the palace of the Savoy and take the Tower of London." (*Piers Plowman*, *Jusserand*, pp. 103-106.)

But the difference between Chaucer and Langland is not limited to the general plan of their respective works. Their style and manner, in the treatment of their subjects, are, likewise, strikingly dissimilar. Langland is always tense and fierce in his denunciation and laughs his withering laugh of scorn at the abuses round about him. But Chaucer is habitually more moderate and restrained, and, though he strives to correct the same abuses, he laughs at them rather good-naturedly and with no trace of bitterness.

"Let us go down a few steps, and we reach the strange, grimacing, unpardonable herd of lyers, knaves, and cheats, who traffic in holy things, absolve for money, sell heaven, deceive the simple, and appear as they 'hadden leve to lye al here lyf after.' In the nethermost circle of his hell, where he scourges them with incessant raillery, the poet confines pell-mell all these gluttoned unbelievers. Like hardy, parasitical plants, they have disjoined the tiles and stones of the sacred edifice, so that the wind steals in, and the rain penetrates; shameless pardoners they are, friars, pilgrims, hermits, with nothing of the saint about them

save the garb, whose example, unless a stop is put to it, will teach the world to despise the clerical dress, those who wear it, and the religion even that tolerates and supports them.

“At this depth, and in the dim recesses where he casts the rays of his lantern, Langland spares none; his ferocious laugh is reverberated by the walls, and the scared night-birds take flight. His mirth is not the mirth of Chaucer, itself less light than the mirth of France; not the joyous peal of laughter which rang out on the Canterbury road, welcoming the discourses of the exhibitor of relics, and the far from disinterested sermons of the friar to sick Thomas; it is a woeful and terrible laugh, harbinger of the final catastrophe and judgment. What they have heard in the plain of Malvern, the accused ones will hear again in the valley of Jehoshaphat.

“They have now no choice, but must come out of their holes; and they come forward into the light of day, hideous and grotesque, saturated with the moisture of their dismal vaults; the sun blinds them, the fresh air makes them giddy. They present a sorry figure. Unlike the pilgrims of Canterbury, they derive no benefit from the feelings of indulgence that soften our hearts on a gay April morn. They will learn to know the difference between the laugh that pardons and the laugh that kills. Langland takes them up, lets them fall, and takes them up again; he never wearies of this cruel sport; he presents them to us now separately, and now collectively: packs of pilgrims, ‘eremytes on an hep,’ pilgrims that run to St. James in Spain, to Rome, to Rocamadour in Guyenne, who have paid visits to every saint. But have they ever sought for St. Truth? No, never! Will they ever know the real place where they might find St.

James? Will they suspect that St. James should 'be sought ther poure syke lyggen (lie), in prisons and in poore cotes? ' They seek St. James in Spain, and St. James is at their gates; they elbow him each day, and they recognise him not.

"The poet passes on to others, then comes back to them, he strikes again in the same place, until the lash cuts their skin; their words, their dress, their stories, all seem to him equally hideous; he turns them about, that they may be well seen, with their wallet by their side and 'an hundredth of ampulles' on their hats, 'signes of Synay and shelles of Galice,' and 'keyes of Rome' and also 'the vernicle bifore': for 'men shulde knowe and se be his signes' where he has been." (*Piers Plowman*, Jusserand, pp. 140-142.)

The chief perversion of the spirit in which *Piers Plowman* was written is due to the fact that it is interpreted as if it had been written in the spirit of the later "reformers." That spirit was, as we know, of its very essence one of revolt against the authority of the Catholic Church and not merely against the abuses that had sprung up in the lives of many of Her children. Moreover, it is only in the false light of the supposition that the Reformation effected a reformation and the deliverance of men from "ecclesiastical bondage" that the author of *Piers Plowman* takes on the character of a "Precursor." (*Long*, p. 81.) In the white light of historical truth such rhetoric approaches very nearly to blasphemy.

"Because Langland reveres virtue," Jusserand quite truly remarks, "many commentators have made a saint of him; because he condemns, as an abuse, the admission of peasants' sons to holy orders, they have said that he was born of good family; and because he speaks in a bitter and passionate way of the wrongs

of his time, they have made him out a radical reformer, aiming at profound changes in the religious and social order of things. He was nothing of all this. The energy of his language, the eloquence and force of his words may have given rise to this delusion. In reality, he is, from the religious and social points of view, one of those rare thinkers who defend moderate ideas with vehemence, and employ all the resources of a fiery spirit in the defence of common sense." (*Jusserand's Piers Plowman*, p. 103.)

Since we are practically without any information from contemporary sources regarding the life and opinions of Langland, we can know the man and his ideals only from his writings. Investigating them as they stand to-day, no unprejudiced person, who knows what the Church is and what Protestantism is, can possibly justify the common opinion that the lines of *Piers Plowman* are Protestant in spirit. Indeed, if we were to accept the fundamental dogma of Lutheranism, that Faith *alone* without good works is sufficient for salvation, the whole significance of the poem would be destroyed. True, the résumé of abuses that Langland enumerates, as found in the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, is literally true. "We see the false beggars shamming for food and fighting at the ale houses, 'great lubbers and long that loth were to labour'; the friars, 'preaching the people for profit of their bellies'; the pardoner, surrounded by the crowd of ignorant believers, whom he deceived with his papal bull and his fair speech; and the corrupt priest, taking his share of the ill-gotten gains, while the bishop, who is not 'worth his two ears', refuses to interfere." (*Vol. II.*, p. 6.)

Such were the manifestations of soul-sickness round about the author of *Piers Plowman*. But where did

he look for the ministrations of the Divine Physician, who alone could heal this spiritual illness? Regarding the Friars, for instance, we are told,

If Gods love and the Church do not cut down such Friars,
The greatest mischief in the world will mount up fast.
(*Vision of the Field Full of Folk.*)

It were a strange concept for a precursor of Protestantism to join God's love with the Church in an effort to save the world.

Again, the lady "lovely to look on," in *The Vision of Holy Church*, discloses her identity thus:

"Holy Church am I," quoth she,	"thou oughtest me to know.
I took thee in my arms first	I made thee free.
To me thou broughtest surities	to do all my bidding
All thy life long	to love me, to believe me."

Then the poet, humbly kneeling, prays Holy Church,

"Teach me no treasure-gaining	but <i>tell me this,</i>
Thou that art called a saint	how may I save my soul?"
	(<i>Ibid.</i>)

The answer of Holy Church does not end after the manner of the bewildering indefiniteness of Protestantism, with the text, "Truth is the Best: God is love" (*Ibid.*), but it proceeds on to a denial of the very foundation of Luther's doctrine:

James the gentle	said in his writings
Faith without Fact	is nothing worth,
As dead as a door-tree	unless deeds follow.
<i>Faith without works is dead.</i>	(<i>Vision of Holy Church.</i>)

Though Piers Plowman, like the characters in the *Canterbury Tales*, makes us clearly aware of the abuses that had sprung up around the Sacrament of Penance, it is he, himself, who plainly confesses,

Whatever thou shalt bind on earth

And so I believe with fealty	God forbid otherwise,
That pardon and penance	and prayer do save
Souls that have sinned	seven times and deadly.

(*The Vision of Gods Bull of Pardon.*)

Nor did the traffic in the sale of "pardons" by fraudulent monks and priests blind Langland to the true doctrine of the Church:

Therefore I counsel you,	ye rich upon this earth,
Who trust for your treasure	to have your three-years pardons,
Be ye not bold enough	to break the Ten Commandments,
And specially, ye masters,	ye mayors and judges,
Ye that have the worlds wealth	and be holden wise,
When ye purchase pardon,	and papal bulls,
At the dreadful Doomsday,	when the dead shall rise,
And all come before Christ	to give account,
How did we lead our lives,	how did we keep the laws,
How did we day by day,	<i>this</i> the judgment will rehearse,
Though ye be a Brother	of all the Orders Five,
<i>Though ye have a pocket full,</i>	Pardons and Absolutions,
And Doublefold Indulgences,	<i>unless Do-well can help you,</i>
<i>Your patents and your pardons</i>	<i>will be worth—a piecrust.</i>

(*Ibid.*)

Even the Pope, we are told, has no power to pardon sins independently of the disposition of the penitent:

The pope hath no power	to grant a pardon
For men without penance	to pass to Paradise. (<i>Ibid.</i>)

And again,

That which was won by wrong	shall be spent by the wicked,
For neither Pope nor Pardoner	hath ever power
To pardon Thee thy sins,	save thou make reparation.
The sin is not remitted	save restitution be made.

(*Vision of the Seven Sins.*)

Besides the doctrine of the Sacrament of Penance, there are other dogmas of the Church clearly professed in the poem. Among them are two that were

widely discussed during the past year. It is the virtue of Mercy that tells us of the Virgin Birth:

A maid named Mary	mother immaculate,
Conceived and was with child	through the Holy Ghost,
And without childbirth taint	into this world brought him.

(*The Triumph of Piers Plowman.*)

And it is Peace that, with scriptural simplicity and brevity, phrases the doctrine of Christ's divinity thus:

So God that made all became man of a maiden. (*Ibid.*)

Catholic devotion to Our Lady is reflected throughout the whole poem, and is frequently stated with child-like simplicity in just such passages as the following:

Therefore I counsel Christian souls	Cry God mercy
And Mary his mother	to be our go-between
That God give us grace	ere we go hence,
Such works to work,	while we be here,
That after our deathday	Do-well may say
At the day of doom,	we did as he taught.

(*The Vision of Gods Bull of Pardon.*)

Again, in Langland, as in Chaucer, the abuses among religious are uncompromisingly recorded, but they are clearly attributed to the infraction of monastic rule, not to the rules themselves and their observance. Moreover, reform is looked for only in the return to "old paths". First we are shown the celestial happiness of those who, in fervor, follow the primitive rule of St. Gregory:

For if there be heaven on earth,	or ease to any soul,
It is in the cloister or the school.	

Then follows a description of the abuses that have crept in through contempt of the primitive spirit in religion and the warning of a reckoning to come that was often used by Protestant reformers as an exam-

ple of Langland's prophetic utterances in their regard:

Ye hold you as lords;	your lands are too broad,
But <i>there shall come a king</i>	and <i>he shall</i> shrive you all
And <i>beat you</i> as the Bible saith	<i>for breaking of your rule.</i>
<i>He shall mend you monks</i>	you cannons and you nuns,
And put you to penance	<i>and make you walk in old paths.</i>

(*The Vision of Reasons Sermon.*)

Were we to concede, for the sake of argument, that Henry VIII., in the suppression of the English monasteries, beat the monks as the Bible saith for the breaking of their rule, it would still be difficult to allow that he ever attempted to mend monks or to induce them to walk in old paths, unless to destroy an institution is to mend it and to murder its inmates or disperse them penniless over the earth is to make them walk in old paths.

Even after so brief a critique as this of the poem *Piers Plowman*, we need feel little apprehension about concluding with Stevenson that "the poem in no respect harmonizes with Wyclif, where Wyclif dissents from any doctrines then universally accepted. . . . Moreover, Dean Milman, in his *History of Latin Christianity*, sees in Langland no disciple, no precursor of Wyclif in his broader religious views. He is no dreamy, speculative theologian. He acquiesces, seemingly, in unquestioning faith in the creed and in the usages of the Church. He is not profane, but reverent as to the Blessed Virgin and the Saints. Pilgrimages, penances, oblations on the altar, and absolution, he does not reject. On Transubstantiation, the Real Presence, and the Sacraments, he is almost silent; but his silence is that of submission, not of doubt." (*The Truth About John Wyclif*, Joseph Stevenson, pp. 46-47.)

Nor does Dean Milman stand alone among Protestant scholars in his conclusion that Langland was no Wyclifite. Imbert-Terry, in the *Chaucer Memorial Lectures for 1900*, tells us, "Langland, indeed, at the period of the Reformation was accredited with being a Wyclifite; but here, again, a mistake has been made, for, although he strongly condemned and satirized the corruption of the friars and other ecclesiastical orders, yet he was, as is frequently apparent in his poem, a strong upholder of the dignity and authority of the Papal offices, severely as he might censure the personal frailties of the individual occupier of the Chair of Saint Peter. In no sense, does he ever support the express doctrine of Wyclif, that it is incumbent on moral men to refuse religious obedience to an immoral leader." (p. 21.)

CHAPTER VI.

WYCLIF

REFERENCES to Wyclif and his doctrine have been frequent in these pages, and so we shall very properly conclude with a sketch of the man and his work. This will best be done by quoting a few passages from the authoritative work written by Father Joseph Stevenson, S.J., of whom Lord Acton remarked, on one occasion, "he is probably, on the whole, the best informed of men living on every part of English history." (*Lord Acton and His Circle, Gasquet, p. 321.*)

"Of Wyclif, personally, we have been unable to form an exalted estimate. Intellectually, there is little to admire in him. He was a voluminous author, and has left behind him a large mass of writings upon various subjects, thus supplying us with ample materials on which to form an estimate as to his mental capacity. These writings are remarkable only as embodying numerous blasphemies, heresies, errors, and absurdities expressed in obscure language.

"Morally, he does not commend our respect. He attacked the Church of which he was a priest, and in which he continued to minister long after he had denounced it as a synagogue of Satan. He rebelled against that ecclesiastical discipline, which he had pledged himself to maintain and enforce. During many years he drew the revenues of his benefice, availing himself of an authority which he declared to be illegal and ungodly; and until the last day of his

life he administered to others, and he himself received, the Sacrament of the Eucharist according to a ritual which he denounced as false and blasphemous. His life must have been a daily lie, and he died as he was about to perpetrate an act of habitual mockery of the great Sacrifice of Calvary.

"The religious system which he succeeded in introducing among his countrymen proves, upon examination, to be a collection of errors and heresies, each of which had previously been condemned by the common voice of the Catholic Church. They were gleaned by him from that common stock of falsehood against which believers had been warned by our Lord from the beginning; but, disregarding the caution, he picked them up, made them his own, and bequeathed this inheritance of evil to his native country. England accepted the legacy without knowing what it would cost her; but the knowledge has at last come. It is only after centuries of suffering and sin, of ignorance and rebellion, of heresy and schism that our bitter experience enables us to estimate, at its true value, the work done by John Wyclif." (*The Truth About John Wyclif*, pp. 233-234.)

As a result of his close study of Wyclif's life at Lutterworth, Father Stevenson presents rather a melancholy dilemma:

"Either he habitually and systematically taught his people the usual Catholic faith and practiced the usual Catholic ritual, neither of which he himself believed; or he substituted for them his own private doctrines and practices, and thereby committed a daily fraud upon the Church, which he pretended to serve. For twenty years, this was the situation in which he and his parishioners stood in reference to each other. To me it seems an awful alternative. I have long sought for an explanation for his conduct, but sought in vain.

His biographers, ancient and modern, are silent; Lewis and Vaughan, Shirely and Lechler, abandon their hero in the hour of his extremity." (*Ibid.*, p. 28.)

The awful circumstances that attended Wyclif's death, in the light of his denial of the Real Presence, are vividly recorded in *Bridgett's History of the Holy Eucharist in Great Britain*:

"Wyclif accused Catholic priests of being hypocrites in adoring the Most Holy Sacrament. Yet, when he had ceased to believe with the Church, he did not consider it safe to change his external demeanour. He continued, therefore, to kneel at the elevation of the Host, while he tried to save his heretical conscience, or, rather, his reputation for consistency, by protesting, in some of his writings, that 'if he conformed himself to the custom of the Church, it was only in the sense of addressing his devotion to the glorified body of Christ which is in Heaven.' Professor Lechler, who gives these facts without a word of censure, does not remark how easily the millions of martyrs might have saved their lives had they been willing to burn incense before idols, with a protest made privately to their friends of their interior intention.

"The death of Wyclif is thus related by the same writer: 'after having suffered for two years from the effects of a paralytic stroke, on Innocents' Day of the year 1384, while hearing Mass in his parish church at Lutterworth, Wyclif sustained a violent stroke at the moment of the elevation of the Host, and sank down on the spot. His tongue in particular was affected by the seizure, so that from that moment he never spoke a single word more, and remained speechless till his death, which took place on Saturday evening — Sylvester's Day — on the eve of the Feast of

Christ's Circumcision. This declaration, the aged priest, John Horn, who must have been a young man of three and twenty in the year of Wyclif's death, confirmed with an oath to Dr. Gascoigne, and it is also entirely credible in every respect.' Of course, Professor Lechler, and those who think with him, see in this no judgment of God. Yet, if those who love the Holy Mass esteem it a precious grace to receive their summons into the unveiled Presence, while celebrating or assisting at the sacred mysteries, nothing can be conceived more awful than for a blaspheming tongue to be struck dumb, and a body accustomed to bend in hypocrisy to fall powerless, at the moment of that solemn ceremony, by which Catholics are wont to make reparation for impiety."

Regarding the Protestant myth that the first translation of the Bible into English was made by Wyclif, Father Stevenson has this to say:

"We assert, then, that from a very early period of our history, the people of England were familiar with the leading facts and doctrines of the Sacred History. The story of the Saxon Caedmon, so admirably told by the Venerable Bede, is known to everyone. This Yorkshire cowherd composed a poem, which embraced an outline of the Old and New Testaments. He sang of the creation of the world, and of our first parents, and told the subsequent history of the children of Israel, as recorded in Holy Writ. Then followed his narrative of our Lord's Incarnation, His Passion, Resurrection and Ascension, the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the teaching of the Apostles. He described the terrors of the Last Judgment, the horrors of hell, and the joys of the Heavenly Kingdom in language so forcible that, on hearing it, men were weaned from their evil ways and led into the paths of holiness.

Fragments of this remarkable poem are still extant, and have been more than once published.

“At the time of his death, the Venerable Bede was employed in translating into the Saxon language the Gospel of St. John. King Alfred’s biographer, Asser, assures us that if the most necessary parts of Holy Writ were not made accessible to his subjects in their own tongue, it was only because the King had no opportunity of carrying into effect his wishes on this point. Long before his time, the entire book of Psalms and the four Gospels had been translated into Saxon. We are spared the necessity of further research into the history of the vernacular Scriptures among our Saxon forefathers by quoting the following passage from the preface of the Rev. J. Forshall to the Wyclifite translation of the Bible: ‘The writings which are still extant show that the Anglo-Saxon Church must have had in its own tongue a considerable amount of Scriptural instruction.’

“The same observation holds good as to the period after the Norman conquest. Before the end of the thirteenth century, an important step had been taken by turning into verse, both French and English, the whole of the Psalter. The translation is a tolerably close rendering of the Latin, and has the additional merit of being simple and expressive. During the reign of the first three Edwards, there appeared a great variety of poetical compositions upon sacred subjects containing large extracts from the Scriptures. ‘Long before Wyclif’s translation,’ writes Archbishop Usher, ‘there existed an English version of the entire Bible,’ an assertion in which he is supported by Dr. James, keeper of the Bodleian and Cottonian Libraries, and a devoted admirer of Wyclif.

“These facts, with many others which might be

quoted, may suffice to show that translations of various portions of the Old and New Testaments had been familiar to Englishmen long before the days of John Wyclif, and that he cannot be considered the originator of this grand idea. Nor is his share very considerable, even in that portion of the work which his admirers of the present day are anxious to assign to him as his own exclusive property. If any portion of the undertaking belongs to him, it is the version of the New Testament, and even on this point his Oxford editors, Forhall and Madden, speak with considerable reserve. 'This translation', write they, and their remark applies only to the New Testament, 'might probably be the work of Wyclif himself.' Possibly, then, he took no active part in the translation of the entire New Testament; certainly he had nothing to do with the version of the Old Testament. Probably, while the New Testament was in progress, or within a short time of its completion, the Old Testament was taken in hand by one of his coadjutors. That this was the case, is proved by a note written at the end of one of the Bodleian MSS., which ascribes the version to Nicholas de Hereford; and Wyclif's recent editors (though naturally anxious to preserve his reputation where possible) tell us that they 'have no hesitation in giving full credence to its statement.' It comprises all the Apocryphal books, so-called, excepting the fourth Book of Esdras. Hereford's version was extremely literal, occasionally obscure, and sometimes incorrect, and a revision was considered necessary. Nor can even this humble portion of the work be ascribed to Wyclif, for it was not issued until some time after his death.

"These details, interesting in themselves, have led us to two important conclusions: We see, in the first place, that the idea of a translation of the Bible into

English did not originate with Wyclif; and that in trying to carry it out, he was merely continuing an idea long practically familiar to his countrymen. We see, in the second place, that little of the actual work of the undertaking can be ascribed to him with any certainty. Perhaps the version of the New Testament may be his, perhaps not; certainly no more. So, then, neither the design nor the execution are due to him. It was not a congenial occupation. The duties of a translator were too humble, and too clearly defined to suit the more aspiring genius of our reformer. Such work afforded him no scope for the exercise of the spirit of railing and invective in which his soul delighted. Abandoning the weary drudgery of translation to others, he found more congenial occupation in writing a ponderous tome, which he was pleased to call his *Summa*, in rivalry to that of St. Thomas of Aquin, and death surprised him while so occupied. He preferred his own wild speculations to the less exciting duties of the translator. The translation of the Holy Scriptures into English did not hold a primary place in the estimation of John Wyclif; and it is ascribed to him in defiance of all the evidence of history." (pp. 104-106.)

Even the martyrologist, Foxe, gives the lie to Wyclifites, who would make their leader the pioneer translator of the Bible. He writes, in his dedication to Archbishop Parker of his edition of the Saxon Gospels, "If histories be well examined, we shall find both before the Conquest and after, as well before John Wyclif was born, as since, the whole body of the Scriptures was, by sundry men, translated into our country tongue."

Before leaving the question of translations of the Bible into the vernacular, it might be well to recall

that such versions of Holy Scripture were not a necessity for scholars in the Ages of Faith, because Latin was commonly understood by them. They were not very badly needed by the unlettered, because they were made thoroughly familiar with Scripture through the medium of religious plays. The wide educational influence that these plays had upon the people is brought out very well by Dr. Walsh in *The Century of Columbus*. "It is almost amusing," he tells us, "to be told that knowledge of the Scriptures was kept from the people at this time, before the Reformation, when these popular plays to which all the countryside flocked, and in which so many took part, were making them thoroughly familiar with all the details of Christ's life. There was much more than this, however, for connected with many of the passion plays were cycles of tableaux or representations of special scenes in which, beginning with Creation, the whole story of the Bible, and particularly those portions which relate to the coming of Christ, were set clearly before them. No better way of impressing upon the people the great truths of Christianity or the life of Christ as the central fact in the world's history could possibly have been imagined. The people were not encouraged to read difficult passages, which even the profoundest theologians find it hard to understand, to take their own meaning out of them and to argue about them, convicting everyone of heresy who did not agree with their interpretations of them, but they were taught the deep moral and religious significance of all the Old and New Testament. They learned the value of the Scriptures as literature, as well as their quality as the underlying document of religion, but, above all, they were taught their relation to life. All this was put before them so that it came as an amuse-

ment and not as a task, and from their earliest years they became familiar with the great thoughts underlying religion so as to secure its influence over them."

It is evident, therefore, in the light of the facts just reviewed, what misapprehensions must arise in the minds of those who suppose that the need of an English Bible was very urgent in Wyclif's day. Writers who have overlooked these facts have made the mistake of judging the needs of medieval England according to the necessities of our modern era. As a consequence, we have the Protestant tradition in this matter founded upon the chimerical necessity of a Bible for instructing the faithful at a time when *Piers Plowman*, admittedly a type of the common people of his day, and "the Precursor of the Reformation", thus described his education:

When I was young	many a year ago,
My father and my friends	set me to school
Till I knew thoroughly	what Holy Scripture said
What is best for the body	what is safest for the soul.

(*The Writers Life.*)

Following are the English versions of the Bible before Wyclif's time:

- 680. *Caedmon's paraphrases.*
- 700. *Psalter by St. Aldhelm.*(?)
- 735. *Ven. Bede.*
- 900. *King Alfred.*
- 950. *The Anglo-Saxon interlinear translation found in the Lindisfarne Gospels and apparently reproduced in the Rushworth Gospels.*
- 1020. *The versions of Aelfric.*
- 1320. *Psalter of William of Shoreham.*
- 1320. *Psalter of Richard Rolle of Hampole, d. 1349.*
Various Catholic versions of the whole Bible testified to by Bl. Thomas More, Cranmer, and Foxe.
- 1380. *Wyclif.*(?) *The Gospels.*(?)
(*Cf. Pope, The Catholic Student's Aids to the Bible, Vol. I., pp. 123-125.*)

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JAN 18 '51	NOV 2 - '59	MY - 6 '70	
NOV 29 '51	NOV 30 '59	JY 2 '71	
NOV 5 '52	DEC 15 '59	MR 18 '72	
NOV 24 '52	JAN 4 '60	FE 5 '86	
AUG 1 '54	AUG 10 '60		
DEC 1 '55	MAY 17 '62		
JAN 24 '56	CT 5 '82		
AUG 11 '56	OCT 15 '62		
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Connolly, T. L.

Introduction to
Chaucer and Langland.

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